

LEST I FORGET!

(EXPERIENCES OF A NEWSPAPER MAN)

BY

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of

The Times of India Bombay

and

Joint Editor of

Land and Water

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DEDICATED TO

All my fellow craftsmen the majority of whom are struggling hard on anything but a decent wage and for whose unbounded enthusiasm for the maintenance of the best traditions of their profession I am second to none in my admiration

P R E F A C E

Some time ago I decided on the suggestion of my friends and colleagues to write a book describing my experiences as a newspaper man extending over a quarter of a century. To write about a craft which on all hands, is considered and rightly so as most important and fascinating is by no means an easy task the more so when one has to recall from memory the various important events spread over that vast period.

These chapters were written mostly in odd hours of leisure snatched from the daily exacting round of duties. Some of them were first published as articles in *The Journalist*, a periodical published in Bombay and reproduced from time to time in *The Jam-e-Jamshed* an Anglo Vernacular newspaper. These have since been revised and re-written. To the editors of these journals however I am indebted for having permitted me to publish those articles in book form.

I wish to make it perfectly clear that this book is primarily intended for those of my friends who are either on the threshold of the journalistic career or are still juniors in the craft. If they find it useful in the pursuit of their honourable calling the present writer will have been amply rewarded.

At the end of the book the reader will find some useful hints concerning newspaper law. At pre

LEST I FORGET

sent, there is no comprehensive book explaining in detail the various aspects of newspaper law, it is time, I think, an attempt was made to bring out such a book

It is my earnest desire to write further chapters concerning my experiences as a staff man of **The Times of India**, with which I am still connected—I must say that I have learned a lot after my joining this great newspaper—shortly after the publication of this book

Finally, lest I should forget, I acknowledge here my gratitude to the authois of several publications In pieparing this book I have had to refer to “The Complete Journalist” by Mr F J Masefield, “Practical Journalism” by Mr Alfred Baker, “The Press” by Mr Wickham Steed, “Press Parade” by Mr Hamilton Fyfe and “Reporters and Reporting” by S B M

March 31, 1948

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SOME ASPECTS OF REPORTING

During the last half a century journalism in India has undergone several changes which have been brought to the notice of Indian readers from time to time. I do not therefore wish to refer to those changes but I cannot help pointing out some of the most important reforms if I may use that word introduced in Indian journalism in that period. I shall then deal with the views expressed by well known persons on reporting and shall point out the difficulties with which the working journalists were faced in those days.

To begin with there is no gainsaying the fact that Indian journalism has improved a great deal in the last few years and a great many newspapers are being conducted more or less on the same lines as those in the West. Of course newspapers in this country have not yet reached the colossal figure of circulation such as is noted in England or America but in all other respects they are as good as English and American newspapers. The question of circulation will sooner or later be dealt with effectively perhaps with the gradual spread of literacy in this country and the consequent demand for newspapers the circulation is bound to increase.

Pictorial Journalism

Half a century ago pictorial journalism was quite unknown in India, and it used to be a novel thing to find even photographs appearing in the newspapers. There is also much difference in printing noticed in modern times which is far more attractive and up-to-date than the effort made in those days. To be quite accurate, pictorial journalism and attractive printing first saw the light of day in Western India about a quarter of a century ago. Perhaps, Bengal also took the lead at the same time in these respects. I am however more familiar with the conditions of journalism in Western India than with those in Bengal.

The reading public which had hitherto been accustomed to seeing the newspapers without any pictures and attractive get-up were simply astounded at the rapidity and frequency with which they came out with pictures of the latest events. Take for instance the pictures of the races organised either at Poona or Bombay which were published the same day they were run, a marvellous achievement upon which the newspapers concerned were often congratulated. But all this entailed a huge expenditure which some of the newspapers with weak financial backing could not continue to incur and consequently they soon came to grief. But those newspapers which could spend a great deal on that important reform have fortunately kept it up and have shown further improvements in their style and method of publishing pictures. There is no doubt that the weak financial backing of the newspapers was due primarily to bad management. But that is beside the point.

Another reform noticed was the publication of topical cartoons, very much on the lines of some of the London newspapers. In fact the work of some of the Indian cartoonists has been much commended by well-known cartoonists like David Low. Topical cartoons like pictures have now a days become so common that the reading public is almost every day regaled with them. Perhaps there will be further improvements in this important branch of journalism in the near future.

Accuracy Essential

Now I shall deal with reporting with which I have been closely associated for 26 years. I am reminded of the famous saying of a great journalist that 'there is no place on the present day newspapers for incompetent and unreliable reporters. Not only must they be fully qualified for their work but they must be gentlemen who can be always depended upon. It is true that the reporters of half a century ago were not as reliable and competent as I will presently show as they are in modern times. Complaints were frequently heard not only of bad reporting but of the members of the profession indulging in the demand of hush money.

Even to day mistakes do occur in reporting. The reporters it should be borne in mind are not infallible persons and the mistakes are not deliberately committed with a view to harassing certain parties and whenever they are made they are straightway acknowledged and corrected.

The late Mr W S Caine M P, who used to visit India frequently on lecturing tours often complained that reporting in this country was quite inefficient

That was probably due to the fact that the reporters in olden days were not well acquainted with shorthand. A well-known American gentleman, who thoroughly appreciates the value of modern reporters, has placed an eloquent testimony on record. "If all the feelings of a patriot," he says, "glow in our bosom on a perusal of those remarkable speeches which are delivered in the Senate, or in those public assemblies where the people are frequently convened to exercise the birth-right of Britons, we owe it to shorthand. All those brilliant and spirit-stirring effusions which the circumstances of the present time combine to draw forth, and which the press transmits to us with such astonishing clarity, warm from the lips and instinct with the soul of the speaker, would have been entirely lost to posterity, and comparatively little known to ourselves, had it not been for the facilities afforded to their preservation by shorthand."

Indeed, what a calamity it would be were the operations of the reporters suspended awhile, or, shall I say, were they to go on strike after the manner of mill-hands! In such a case a blank would be left in the political and judicial history of our country, an impulse would be wanting to the public mind, and the nation would be taught to feel and acknowledge the important purpose it answers in the great business of life. Such is the value of the reporter with the knowledge of shorthand. It remains to be seen whether science will hereafter supersede the reporter by some other means, but till he is so superseded, no doubt, the reporter is as essential to modern life as the newspaper itself at the breakfast table.

Reporting is a Mental Exercise

The difficulty experienced by the reporters years ago was due to the fact that shorthand teachers then were very few and far between and therefore the speeches delivered at public meetings were generally reported in long hand, and such reports were not always accurate. In this connection Mr Allen Reed the famous reporter, who had come to India several times as the official reporter for the Indian National Congress and once for the Government of India during the sittings of the Opium Commission has stated in his book that correct reporting and condensing are a mental exercise of a severe character. To perform his work efficiently the reporter must bring his mind to bear on this also, and not only endeavour to understand the general drift of what he is reporting but to catch the meaning of every expression. Sometimes ridiculous mistakes are made owing to hearing of half sounds. It is pointed out how a reporter blundered in a proper name while reporting a speech from the pulpit. The clergyman used the phrase the siege of Abimahk when was actually written and printed as the siege of Lamerick. Very often for such mistakes the speaker himself is to blame for being quite indistinct to the press.

Reporter Not Always to Blame

Moreover much of the reporter's difficulty arises from the structure or style of speeches. Some speakers and their number is very small speak with the accuracy of a written composition and they are very popular with the reporting fraternity. It is indeed a pleasure to report such speeches and the task of the

reporter is considerably simplified. But take the case of speakers whose style is loose, inaccurate and ambiguous, and the number of such speakers in this country, as in perhaps other countries, is very large. Such speakers harass and perplex the reporter to such an extent that in transcribing his notes he has perforce to burn a good deal of midnight oil, and yet he is not satisfied with his "copy". Verily, such speakers are the despair of the reporter. Mr Reed has himself admitted that "it is not long sentences in themselves, or difficult words, that create embarrassment, it is intricate sentences that defy analysis that are the bane of the reporter's existence and weigh upon him like a nightmare". In the case of such speakers it is always well that they should obtain from the reporter a literal transcript of their utterances. It would, indeed, be a revelation to them, for they would see in the transcript, as in a mirror, what they had actually spoken.

2 REPORTER'S DREAM

I wish to dwell on the difficulties usually experienced by reporters at public meetings. It is not possible for the speaker to realise what those difficulties are—he invariably thinks he has on purpose been wrongly reported in the press but he forgets that the fault lies with him and not with the reporter. Very often the reporter comes across involved sentences in a speech as I will presently show. Such a speech is much too difficult to condense let alone to reproduce *verbatim*.

On one occasion the present writer had the misfortune to report a speaker whose speech was bad in all conscience. He was addressing his audience on the political situation in India. His sentences were long parenthetical highly involved and incoherent. I do not wish to offend him by mentioning his name but I guess my colleagues will easily make out who that politician is. I cannot forget that occasion because the speech sought to criticise a well known British statesman whose views on India were considered far from satisfactory in the country. Such a speaker I repeat is the despair of the reporter.

Don't Blame the Reporter

Let me quote a specimen of an involved speech to which Mr Allen Reed has referred in his book. The

speaker began by saying "The resolution which has been moved by my friend on my right—I wish he was always on my right, for he is a kind of man—you know what I mean—I am always glad, and so is everybody that knows him as well as I do—we went to school together, I don't know how many years ago and I don't want to remember—I was about to say that the principles which we are to consider this evening are principles that no one, not even the lady who has just spoken—and we are delighted to see ladies on the platform, how we should get on without them I am sure—well, I suppose they could not get on without us either, for you know Milton says or if it is not Milton, I am not quite sure, but as we advance in life our memory does not improve, at least that is my experience" What a confusion of incomplete and parenthetical sentences indeed! Mr Reed rightly thinks, perhaps from his own experiences as a reporter, that the vocation of the skilled reporter would be gone were speakers of the type referred to numerous There is hardly a single idea conveyed in the above passage

The reporter does not like a speaker who indulges in words, words, and the Sahara of words Of Mr Gladstone it has been recorded that he was a deliberate speaker, not difficult to follow, rarely speaking more than 130 words a minute I suppose several of my friends in the profession have reported the speeches of the late Right Hon Srinivasa Sastri About 30 years ago, I happened to be present at the meeting which he addressed at the Servants of India Society, Bombay, explaining the defective working of the diarchical form of Government of India His sentences were short, well worded, simple in style, and above

all intelligible. It was indeed a pleasure to report his speeches. There is no gainsaying the fact that speakers of the type of Mr. Sastri are very few in this country.

Skill of Summarisation

In Bombay City the task of the reporter is often simplified inasmuch as the speeches delivered are cut and dried. But such speeches have to be skilfully summarised. Unlike in other parts of the country, speeches in Western India are condensed. In time of war newspapers can ill afford a column or even less for a speech, however important it may be. Even the Governor's speeches, which in normal times are practically untouched by the newspapers, are now subject to drastic pruning for the reporter. Like the law of the land, is not a respecter of persons, however highly placed they may be, he has to adhere very strictly to the instructions given him by the Chief Reporter, who in turn has to carry out the instructions of the News Editor. While condensing or summarising a speech, the reporter faithfully reproduces the ideas of the speaker. In fact, there is a distinct obligation on the part of the reporter to treat fairly the speakers whose speeches they report. Of course, if the speaker is inaudible or indistinct at the press table, the reporter is not responsible for an inaccurate report. In such cases, the oft-repeated rule is always observed by the reporter—'if in doubt, leave out'.

Reporter Not an Author But

The summary of a speech made by the reporter is an effort for which he alone is responsible. In other words, the reporter himself is the author of that com-

position While on this subject, I am reminded of a legal controversy which arose in 1899 over the speeches of Lord Roseberry The point arose whether the reporter was an author The Master of the Rolls made a proper distinction He pointed out that a reporter who took down a speech and transcribed it *verbatim* was not an author Obviously there is nothing in the nature of composition in the process of transcription by a reporter He simply arranges the sentences punctuates, supplies capital letters, possibly divides the matter into paragraphs and even sometimes corrects grammatical lapses But the Master of the Rolls declared that "if the reporter of a speech gives the substance of it in his own language, if although the ideas are not his, the expression of them is his own, and not the speaker's, the reported-speech would be an original composition of which the reporter would be the author and he would be entitled to copyright for his own production" These observations are perhaps unknown to most of my colleagues

Judgment Plus Justice

Another matter to which I wish to refer is somewhat common in this country, as in other countries How often have we heard a speaker complain of being wilfully misrepresented? The reporter should keep himself absolutely free from malice, otherwise he will subject his newspaper to costly litigation and bring his own career to an ignominious end The distortion of facts of a certain incident which happened in the Bombay province many years ago cost a newspaper a large sum of money, by way of damages awarded by the High Court The damages, needless to say, crip-

pled that newspaper I am aware of that incident as I was on the staff of the newspaper at the time

The reporter has to keep an open mind while reporting any incident. If he for instance imported his own views into his 'copy' it would not be considered a fair report. He has to keep his eyes and ears open. While reporting a political incident he may be pestered by rival parties. In such a case it is advisable for him to report the bare facts of the situation to his newspaper.

I hope I shall be excused if I mention here an illustration of misrepresentation of political speeches many years ago when I was a cub reporter on a Bombay daily. A colleague on that newspaper took great delight in giving colourful stories of political happenings misrepresenting the politicians whom he did not like. That went on for quite a long time and eventually an intelligent section of the reading public, being fed up with what was dished out to them day after day protested against the campaign of misrepresentation against the politician and the newspaper had to improve its method of presenting political stories.

3

MORE ABOUT REPORTERS' DIFFICULTIES

I hope I am not trying the patience of my readers by referring in detail to the difficulties experienced by reporters. These have not been ventilated sufficiently in the past. For a long time now, working journalists have put up with hindrances; inconveniences and, if I may add, gratuitous insults.

It is very often forgotten by the public who, of course, cannot do without newspapers, the part that is being played by the newspaperman in the nation's political, social and economic life. In the words of the late Mr. Lloyd George "he is responsible for keeping the people informed on all matters affecting their social life, business, sport, art, literature, religion, and morality. All the nation is his class, and his courses of instruction run on all the year through, without vacations."

"A Glorified Clerk"?

For some reason or other, the popular impression seems to be that the reporter is a mere short-hand writer, or nothing more than a "glorified clerk." I do not know who is responsible for conveying this manifestly wrong impression. Let it be known to all who come across reporters --members of the Fourth Estate--that when they attend social functions representing their news-

papers they do so in response to invitations they are not interlopers unlike some persons who pose themselves as journalists on such occasions. In other words they are guests of the persons who have invited them. Unfortunately this position is not realised and that is why invariably there is a clash between them and their hosts.

Whilst it is not desirable for the reporter to create a scene at a function with a view to asserting his right I think he would be perfectly justified if he quietly walked out mentioning not even a line about it in his newspaper. That is the best and most honourable course for him to adopt.

This has happened many a time and I feel the press must take drastic action in the matter without any hesitation. I do not know whether the press is insulted at public functions in the West. I dare say such instances there are very few and far between. Let the Indian public remember—let there be no mistake about it—that it is only out of courtesy that the press depute, its accredited representatives to report a function and when he is there he knows his own job. He does not require to be told what to report nor does he need any guidance from the host. The latter, to my mind should as far as possible, be kept at arm's length. Let him see for himself what appears in the newspapers the day after the function. That to my mind, is the correct attitude to adopt.

Before attending a public meeting or a lecture the reporter is supposed to have studied the subject to be dealt with and therefore he is expected to know more about it than any member of the audience.

Actually what happens sometimes is that the reporter is believed to be wholly ignorant of the subject dealt with by the speaker, and that is why he is looked upon by the audience as one who does not deserve any consideration or respect. I am not exaggerating at all when I mention this

Public Meeting—No News

When a speaker finds that he is dismissed in a few sentences or paragraphs in the newspapers, he jumps to the conclusion that the reporter is ignorant of the subject he had dealt with in his speech. This is a wrong belief. A public meeting or a lecture does not at all provide "news", and as such the report of it, if published, is given merely to inform the public of what had taken place at it. Nowadays one seldom comes across a public speech containing news. Whatever is published, when space permits, is drastically condensed. Perhaps the public does not know what happens to the reporter's "copy" after it has been submitted. His is not the last word on the subject. His duty ends directly the "copy" is handed to the sub-editor. But the speaker still believes that he has been "badly handled" by the reporter.

Scant Courtesy

Another reason why the reporter does not sometimes command respect at public gatherings is that he has allowed himself to be treated with scant courtesy far too long. I remember very well how the press was treated on one occasion at a banquet of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. (I am referring to times when the presiding authority was known as the President,

and not as Mayor) Representatives of the local news papers had been invited to the banquet at which the Governor of Bombay was the guest of honour Not knowing what was in store for them the reporters went to the function, and to their great surprise they found that no seats had been provided for them at the dinner table At the eleventh hour they were all told to crowd themselves into another room and return to the hall at the time of speech making It was rather a tall order And do you think the reporters obeyed that high command? They did not take the insult lying down They strongly resented the attitude of the President and walked out When the President (who was obviously unaware of the reporters walk out because he had been kept wholly in the dark by the Secretary) opened his newspaper the next day, he found nothing about the banquet in it It was then that he realised that the press must have been badly treated the previous night and expressed his readiness to make ample amends But the mischief had already been done Since then there has been no complaint of bad treatment so far as the social functions of the Corporation are concerned

Boycott Social Functions

Recently however there have been several instances where the journalists had to boycott (I do not like this word but have to use it in the absence of any other suitable word) important social functions To describe those instances seriatim would doubtless entail a good deal of space Suffice it to say in all those instances invitations had been issued to the press and the latter had duly acknowledged them and

despite that fact, the journalists were ill-treated. But the press did not pocket the insult, it at once retaliated in the usual way.

"Great Engine of The Press"

This brings me almost to the end of my story I am glad that the press is unanimous in its opinion that a person, however highly placed, or an institution, however important, should treat the press with the consideration and respect it deserves whenever its representatives are his or its guests and if they want publicity

The honour of the journalistic profession should be jealously safeguarded by its members "The great engine of the press", as Thackeray used to call it, should be on the alert to safeguard its own interests and privileges That engine should be forthwith set in motion if anything goes amiss Unfortunately we have in this country very few associations which protect our interests, they are practically in a moribund condition. Heaven knows when they will properly function

4 MY CONTACT WITH VERNACULAR PRESS

I loath writing about myself or about my experiences as a working journalist. There are still some journalists in our midst who have spent the best part of their lives in active service and I have yet to learn a good deal from them and to compare their experience with mine. Twenty six years ago I was wholly in the dark how reporters got news and was always interested to see them work at public meetings. I always admired their team work even in those days there was close co operation among the 'gentlemen of the press' (as we were addressed by a former Governor of Bombay). Only one thing I did not like or rather could not understand why they all did not work independently of one another. For some reason or other vernacular newspaper reporters in particular depended for their copy (I hope I shall be pardoned by them for being frank) upon their confreres on English newspapers. That practice I am glad to say is now a thing of the past. What surprises me more than anything else is how they produce column after column of reports of public functions. They know how to spin out reports.

A Prolific Writer

Even today I find my esteemed friend and colleague Mr Hormusji Parni Chief Reporter of The

Jam-e-Jamshed, capable of satisfying the needs of his paper, sometimes more than its needs, by writing his "copy" at great length. Perhaps there are also others equally capable like him, but unfortunately I have not yet come across them

I was at my wits' end when I first entered in 1919 the sanctum of the editor of **The Sanj Vartaman**, the first newspaper with which I began my career. Of course, before that year, I was a free lance and had contributed a series of articles and letters to **The Advocate of India** (now defunct), the editor of which, Mr. Cunningham, encouraged me to write. But to the then editor of **The Sanj Vartaman**, Mr. Sorabji Pallonji Kapadia, I am greatly indebted for giving me the opportunity to serve on his staff. As a tyro, I was anxious to learn about the difficult art of getting news. But the reporters (now they are veterans in the profession) under whom I was kept were reluctant to take me into their confidence. In fact, on the very first day, if I remember rightly, the late Mr. Ardeshir Dadabhai Katrak, gave me a bit of his mind when I ventured to ask him to explain to me how the reporters on the paper got the day's news. "Why have you come here? Look at our condition! We have been slogging here for years on starvation pay. Do you think you will ever draw a fat salary as a reporter? You had better go in for some other calling." I was simply dumbfounded. What reply could I give him? For some time I could not understand how to make progress in surroundings which were far from congenial.

A Remarkable Feat

There was another gentleman who is now practically on the retired list who had been asked to correct my copy. That gentleman I must admit had the knack of manufacturing copy. He could for instance scribble out about 20 pages in less than half an hour reporting somebody's speech sitting in the office. Sometimes when he was asked to rush his 'copy' (The Sanj Vartaman is an evening paper) he would do so even while gulping bread and butter a feat which he alone was capable of performing. "Mr ——— you don't know how we struggle in this wretched line" he used to say whenever I asked him to go out a little while for lunch.

There was at the time a big coal strike in England and the newspaper office was flooded with Reuters messages. One day a message stated in official language that a 'White Paper' had been issued by the British Government explaining their attitude towards the strike and I was asked to translate that message into Gujarati and I did so quite literally. When I showed my copy to my 'Guru' he laughed and showed it to the editor. The latter being aware of my obvious ignorance corrected my error and explained to me that the 'White Paper' was an official document and that its colour was not necessarily white.

After about six months stay in that office I became confident of turning in good stories. Bombay City was confronted with the strike of scavengers and I was asked one fine afternoon by Mr Kapadia to go and interview the then Municipal Commissioner,

the late Mr Clayton (afterwards Sir Hugh Clayton), and to rush "copy" for that day's paper. I introduced myself to the Commissioner, who answered my questions and warned me to give a faithful report of the interview. I wrote up the report and showed it to the editor, who was apparently pleased with my "scoop" and featured it. Thus the Gujarati knowing public knew through the medium of the paper the attitude of the Commissioner towards the strike.

Too Many Meetings

There was not much scope for reporting in those days, and I naturally felt that if I were given an opportunity to work on an English newspaper, I should be able to cut a good figure. At last that opportunity came and I was recommended to work as a junior on **The Bombay Chronicle**, a newspaper which gave me ample scope for reporting. There were three of us on the reporting staff, my chief being the late Mr V. V. Kumtekar, till recently senior Assistant Editor of **The Bombay Sentinel**. The other colleague was a Bengali youth, Mr K. M. Shah. Those were the days when the press reporters had very little time to spare. The non-co-operation campaign and the Khilafat agitation virtually engulfed Bombay City and the Presidency and three or four public meetings a day were often held in the various parts of the city. They had to be covered at some length for the nationalist newspaper.

Political Assignments

My first two "great" assignments out of Bombay were the Gujarat Provincial Political Conference and the Provincial Khilafat Conference, which were held

at Broach The late Maulana Mahomed Ali and the late Maulana Shaukat Ali were in my compartment during my night journey to Broach The Ali Brothers introduced me to Mr Devadas Gandhi the next morning while the train was crossing the Narbudda Bridge It was at Broach that I had first met Mr Burjorji Framji Bharucha, who was good enough to guide me in the preparation of my copy Mr Bharucha even in those days had given up his auditing work and was fond of writing letters, properly analysed numerically to the press He wrote on every conceivable topic under the sun

The two conferences had to be carefully reported for one of the speakers was no other than my own editor the late Mr Marmaduke Pickthall, who was a European Muslim My eight days stay in Broach was a tiresome affair but it doubtless gave me some experience of being a special correspondent Lest I should forget I must mention here the name of another gentleman who rendered my task easy, I mean Mr Indulal Yagnik He was a very influential gentleman in Gujerat in those days

Easy going Telegraphists

I was very impatient about the transmission of the press messages which I handed in to the Telegraph Superintendent at Broach because I was told that they took things easy I must say that things have considerably improved since There is no gain saying the fact that very often the special correspondent is at the mercy of the district telegraph office where his messages are booked for transmission These telegraphists unlike their confreres in Bombay

and other Presidency towns, are easy-going people. Whenever I am out of Bombay on a special job for my paper, I am, unlike other press correspondents, very impatient about the safe despatch of my messages. Sometimes I go to the telegraph office before retiring to bed to find out whether my messages have been cleared.

In this connection, I must say I was very often advised by my esteemed friend, Mr Framroze Master, not to worry at all about my messages. I could see, working with him, out of Bombay, that he never used to worry about his messages once they were handed over to his peon for being despatched to his paper. Mr Framroze, I must mention here, in passing, retired from active journalism as Chief Reporter of *The Times of India* on April 30, 1932. I remember this date very well, because I joined his paper in the vacancy caused by his retirement.

5 THE IDEAL JOURNALIST

I have already stated that whilst *The Sanj Vartaman* afforded me the first opportunity to serve on a daily newspaper thanks to the kindness of its then editor, Mr Sorabji Kapadia, it did not bring me in frequent contact with other working journalists from whom I could learn something and acquire more experience. My work on that paper was generally confined to the translation into Gujarati of A P (Associated Press) and Reuters telegrams. I was told that that was the main work which the reporters on the staff of Gujarati newspapers were asked to do. Very rarely indeed I was asked to do actual reporting. Fortunately for me the late Mr Jehangir Balsara formerly Chief Reporter of *The Bombay Chronicle* suddenly made up his mind to give up journalism with a view to trying his luck on the Bombay Stock Exchange and thus made room for me on the staff of that well known nationalist daily.

Mr Vania's "Copy"

The Bombay Chronicle I must say brought me in direct touch with veteran journalists with whom it was a great pleasure to work. Whilst I acknowledged with gratitude in the previous chapter the assistance given me by Mr Framroze Master I forgot to refer to my old colleague, Mr Dinshaw D Vania J P whose copy

was eagerly looked forward to by all reporters doing "calls" In those days, there was only one Anglo-Indian evening daily in Bombay and consequently there was no competition in the field Mr Dinshaw always obliged us by giving us the benefit of his labours His information concerning any matter was seldom, perhaps never, challenged by any reporter For one thing, he had established good contacts with the police authorities and other officials who always gave him reliable information, and for another, no other reporters took the trouble of approaching even the Commissioner of Police, let alone other high officials, to verify important matters, because they had blind faith in Mr Dinshaw's "copy" He always put in his appearance in the reporters' room at the Esplanade Police Court about 1-30 p m, and as soon as he entered the room, there would be anxious inquiries from all the four corners The last reporter to use Mr Dinshaw's "copy" every day was the late Mr Cursetji M Sastri, of The Jame-e-Jamshed, who never bothered to begin his day's work before 4 p m

All that came to a stop with the publication of **The Evening News of India**, and its rival **The Indian Daily Mail**. Whilst the former is still going strong, like the proverbial "Johnny Walker," the latter after nearly nine years of uneventful career disappeared from Bombay's "Fleet Street," leaving its staff in a miserable condition How could the reporters continue to depend upon Mr Dinshaw's "copy," when they had to secure good stories for their respective papers? It was then that the cub reporters of those days realised what it was to get first class news ahead

of their rivals. It was then that they all realised how to get 'scoops', and who was able to get them.

Lord Northcliffe

The quest of news is one of the most fascinating phases of journalistic work. It has been rightly remarked that when journalists become reminiscent much is heard of the great feats of the past in getting exclusive news. Here let me digress a bit. The late Lord Northcliffe attached considerable importance to the publication in his papers of exclusive news. Speaking in 1920 on the policy of *The Daily Mail* (London) Lord Northcliffe declared that the old journalism dealt with only a few aspects of life. 'What we did was to extend its purview to life as a whole. This was difficult. It involved the training of a new type of journalist. The old type was convinced that anything which would be a subject of conversation ought to be kept out of the papers. The only thing that will sell a newspaper in large numbers is news and news is anything out of the ordinary. Northcliffe often repeated his favourite saying that news is surprise, an unexpected happening, that if a dog bites a man it is not news, but that if a man bites a dog it is news.'

"Thou Shalt Not Be Dull"

What does the public really want? Mr. Wickham Steed, an unrepentant journalist (to use his own words) who trained himself for journalism and cares about the press, asked that question while writing about *The Press*. The public does not want and sooner or later ceases to buy or to read dull newspapers. Hence according to Mr. Steed the first commandment

of the journalistic decalogue "THOU SHALT NOT BE DULL" True though it be that a certain class of staid newspaper readers abhor sensationalism and enjoy nothing so much as the assurance that everything is well in the best of all possible worlds, they are not the class upon whom enterprising newspapers can rely for circulation or whose preferences determine public opinion One fundamental fact which journals and journalists who cater for the taste of this class often forget is that the main function of a newspaper is to give news, and that to miss it is a cardinal journalistic sin

What are known as "stunts" are sometimes indulged in by newspapers A "stunt" is not a scoop, it is an effort to palm off something as original or important, a sensation that exists only in the imagination of its authors. I shall refer to this aspect of journalism later.

In their quest of news the reporters of the local newspapers, particularly of the evening papers, often incurred the displeasure of their colleagues working on rival newspapers That could not be helped Every day at 4-30 p.m. the editor of **The Indian Daily Mail**, of which I had been a senior reporter, used to read very minutely his rival paper and shout from his seat if any item of news was missed "Why was this d d news missed? You shall get the sack the next time you miss anything" That was how we were treated by our editor, but the treatment, I must admit, was in the best interests of the paper It was he who made us realise that "it is the journalist who makes the newspaper" As Mr R D Blumenfeld once re-

marked, 'a journalist is the foundation stone of the newspaper structure and the news sheet minus his magic touch would fail without the hope of recovery'

Ideal Journalist

The first editor of *The Indian Daily Mail* was Mr Frederick Holsinger who often sermonised to us on how to become an ideal journalist. Perhaps he remembered what Mr Wickham Steed had said in this connection. Mr Steed's views on an ideal journalist are worth quoting. 'The ideal journalist would be one who having mastered and assimilated the wisdom of the ancients the philosophies of the more modern the knowledge of scientists the mechanics of engineers the history of his own and of other times and the chief factors in economic social and political life should be able to hide all these things in his bosom and to supply as much of them as might be readily digested to his millions of readers in proportion as he divined their desire for them' Mr Holsinger was always prepared to pay any price for a scoop and was in exultation when his paper scooped over its rivals.

But Mr Holsinger did not remain long enough to guide the staff. One afternoon we got a rude shock when we read in our own paper that the boss had tendered his resignation owing to some differences with the proprietor. The rot then set in. The paper, doubtless lost the services of a really competent journalist and the staff ceased to get the inspiration with which they had assiduously worked hitherto. Holsinger had a keen nose for news and always commended the smart work of his staff.

I suppose many of you are still aware of Mr F W Wilson's articles in **The Indian Daily Mail**, an evening daily in Bombay, which, as I have already stated in the previous chapters, disappeared after an uneventful career. Mr Wilson was the fourth editor of that newspaper, the first three being Mr Holsinger, Sir C Y Chintamani and Mr K Natarajan. Mr Wilson had a powerful, trenchant and ready pen. Having been Lord Northcliffe's Secretary for many years, he knew the art of conducting a newspaper.

A Great Writer

I do not remember how long Wilson had been in charge of **The Pioneer** (of Allahabad) before he came down to Bombay to succeed Mr Natarajan. His outspoken articles in **The Pioneer** were naturally resented by the authorities in the United Provinces. When he came to Bombay, his idea was—and I am in a position to say with some authority, having had the privilege of working under him as Chief Reporter—to make **The Indian Daily Mail** a powerful organ of public opinion. He commended the activities of Government officials when he knew that they deserved praise, he slashed them when he was convinced that they fully deserved that treatment.

Wilson was a prolific writer indeed. He used to attend his office daily at 9.30 a.m. after reading *The Times of India* before breakfast. The only other news paper he read before launching his bombardment was *The Bombay Chronicle*. His Secretary was always in readiness by 10 a.m. to take down his dictation—not in shorthand because Wilson had no patience to wait till his dictated stuff was transcribed—straight on her typewriter. *The Indian Daily Mail*, before the advent of Wilson had very few features in fact it was a dull newspaper. Wilson made it a lively and readable paper. He did not believe in bringing out a dozen editions of the paper every day, he attached considerable importance to the quality of the paper. In other words what he wanted was news and nothing but news to appear in his paper. If anybody sent him an article even on a political subject he would not attach any importance to it. But if anybody came and gave him news he would at once jump from his seat, even in the midst of his dictation and ask me to find out all about it and turn in a good story.

Those "Scrutator" Columns

Heard on the *Apollo Bunder* by *Scrutator* was a good feature introduced by Wilson and he regularly maintained it till the last day of his stay with the paper. That feature, I know was well supported by the reading public. It mostly contained Wilson's criticisms on current topics expressed in simple language. And how many columns did he write every day? He seldom wrote less than four columns a day in about two hours (sometimes he wrote even six columns), a re

markable feat which very few journalists, I think, are capable of performing.

On the very first day of his arrival Wilson asked me if I could take down in shorthand a leading article explaining the policy of the paper. How could I decline to take down his dictation? Believe me, in about 12 minutes he completed his stuff. I must say that Wilson was one of the fastest writers in India.

Wilson was one of those editors who believed that newspapermen—by that he meant working journalists—should not appear on public platforms, that their business was to write about public affairs and that they could not be efficient writers as well as good speakers. Sir Stanley Reed, whatever Wilson might have said, is both a first class writer and a very good speaker, perhaps a terror to reporters, because he speaks very fast.

“Any news?” Wilson always used to greet me every morning with that inquiry. On the occasion of Mr. Gandhi’s famous march to Dandi for salt satyagraha, Wilson “manufactured” in Bombay several news stories about that march. His standing instructions to me were in those days to go every day to the Secretariat, particularly to the Department of Public Information, and get the official version of the satyagraha campaign. Invariably his stories were replete with news.

Good Friday Episode

I still remember the occasion when I was asked to go and interview the then Archbishop of Bombay. The instructions were that I should ask His Grace as to what he thought of the Christians who indulged in

rejoicing on Good Friday and also on him further
 ques on the subject. His in truth is a me
 thinking for a while

My good friend was as you want to know
 views on this subject. We have question put to me by
 his Grace after a special of permission His Grace
 made a statement to me on demand in unequivocal
 terms during on a solemn occasion like Good Fri
 day. I thought I had better say — usually I find
 what difficult to turn in a good story on holiday —
 and promptly gave it to the editor. Well done my
 boy, that the editor of the I went from room to
 remarked Wilson after reading my copy. He him
 self rubbed it and gave it a nice headline. The
 headline was — GOOD FRIDAY — DANCE FRIDAY!
 Several Roman Catholic gentlemen came to Wilson the
 next day and told him that the story was a mere rant
 and that the Archbishop could not possibly have made
 the statement attributed to him. Go and see your
 Archbishop and verify our story. Wilson firm
 reply to them. Four days later the Archbishop
 Secretary wrote to the editor merely objecting to the
 sensational headline and not to the content of the
 story.

Wilson never liked a member of his staff sitting
 idle. Go and get me some work for his usual command. He
 alone never liked long reports of public meetings. His
 instructions to Mr. K. Kuma Rao, M.A. Editor were
 to boil down such reports and the latter boiled them
 down to a few paragraphs.

Public men were always reluctant to talk freely
 to Wilson. The reason was obvious. They knew very

well that if they told him anything, it would promptly appear in his paper the next day That was why he was disliked and kept at arm's length by several Europeans in Bombay.

A Great Scoop

I know how Wilson and his friend, Mr George Slocombe, then special correspondent of **The Daily Herald** (London), decided to see Mr Gandhi in jail during the salt satyagraha campaign and get his views on the political *impasse*. Wilson advised Slocombe to see Mr. Gandhi alone at Yeivada and come back straight to Bombay with the story That was done, and **The Indian Daily Mail** and **The Daily Herald** were the two newspapers that came out with that great story ahead of other newspapers in the world

In those days **The Indian Daily Mail** office was the rendezvous of famous international journalists like Negley Farson, Slocombe and Ketchum They used to exchange notes and "cook up" news stories for their respective newspapers I had the rare privilege of working with these great journalists at Karachi where the momentous session of the Indian National Congress was held

Before I refer to the question of getting scoops for your newspaper I wish to mention an amusing incident which occurred while I was reporting a political meeting during the early days of the non co operation movement. The late Mr Vithalbhai Patel brother of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel was addressing the meeting in Gujarati. The instructions given to me by my Chief Reporter were to report his speech fully as **The Bombay Chronicle** could not afford to neglect a politician of the reputation of Mr Vithalbhai Patel. As he was speaking Mr Patel noticed that I was taking copious notes in shorthand. Directly he finished his speech he told me to see him at his residence the following day. Who was I to ask him why he was in need of a reporter of **The Bombay Chronicle**? I could have of course declined to see him but I thought it would be unwise to incur his displeasure.

When I went to the residence of Mr Patel I was still unaware of the object of the interview. Just take this down was the command of Mr Vithalbhai. What should I take down? I replied. Question. What do you think of the present political situation? Now take down the answer. In that way Mr Patel went on asking questions and answering them himself. A very funny interview, indeed! The

next day I reported the matter to my Chief, and he resented the treatment meted out to me by Mr Patel. Perhaps, Mr Patel thought that I was wholly ignorant of interviewing well-known persons, and that was why he himself asked questions and answered them "for my benefit"

Frankly speaking, Mr Patel always misjudged journalists. He was one of those disgruntled politicians whom it was very difficult to satisfy. I do not know whether Mr Patel continued the same habit when he rose to the exalted position of President of the Central Legislative Assembly. I am only aware of an occasion when he quarrelled with the special correspondent of a leading newspaper in this country as he incorrectly reported to the newspaper an important ruling given by the President. Mr Patel had his idiosyncrasies of which the journalists were well aware, they, however, respected his age and position. That was why his autocracy and high-handedness were tolerated by the press in this country. I do not know how he fared in England and on the Continent which he visited many years ago, accompanied by Mr Jamnadas Mehta, another politician difficult to satisfy. There he could not possibly have dictated interviews to the press in the manner in which he had dictated to me. The foreign press knows very well how to deal with recalcitrant politicians.

So much, I think, is quite sufficient for Mr Vithalbhai Patel. As I have already stated before, newspapers exist primarily for news. Whether the press be looked upon as a hydra-headed monster, or as the safeguard of freedom in democratic communi-

ties news is its life blood The outstanding function of the press is to gather to make known and to interpret news of public interest This is a function, in the words of a famous journalist, socially valuable and uprightly discharged with a sense of responsibility highly honourable I only wish politicians of the type of Mr Patel had known this cardinal principle on which the press discharges its functions'

The late Mr J T Delane the famous editor of *The Times* (London) always used to exhort his colleagues that every journalist should have a keen nose for news A newspaper without extraordinary items of news would doubtless be considered a dull paper not worth being touched even with a pair of tongs Let me mention how Delane used to get his scoops It is said that he was out one day with the old Surrey foxhounds and in the field met an army contractor who casually mentioned a consignment of arms which had been sent to the Sicilian insurgents with the consent of Lord Palmerston Delane enjoyed his day's run and on returning to London started off on another scent Having verified his friend's information he charged the Government of the day with having connived at a supply of arms from the Queen's stores to the enemies of a sovereign in whose quarrel Her Britannic Majesty was neutral The fact was that the contractor was asked for stores by the insurgents and having none in stock he asked for some from the Ordnance promising to replace them soon Palmerston to whom the matter was referred gave his consent and the arms were sent The report in *The Times* was the first intimation that

Lord John Russell had on this "provoking business," as he called it. What was the result? Well, the result was the report was found to be perfectly correct and Palmerston was compelled to make a formal official apology to the King of Naples.

Although Delane invariably enjoyed himself when he got first class news stories, he was not averse to getting ordinary news. Once when he was away for a short time he jocularly congratulated his deputy on being "lucky with murders" in his absence.

In the case of a great newspaper sometimes exclusive news comes to its editor. Once Lord Randolph Churchill called at **The Times** office and gave the exclusive news of his resignation from the Government.

Take another instance. Mr Tom Clarke, formerly editor of the **News Chronicle** (London), being himself an old reporter, well trained by Lord Northcliffe, had a notable scoop in 1930 when he published the definite announcement that Chapman, the famous cricketer was to be dropped as captain of the Test team for the crucial match at the Oval with Australia and that Wyatt would take his place. The match was the talk of the whole country and the news was electric. Hearing the hint that Chapman was to be superseded, Tom Clarke put on his coat and disappeared. The next that was heard from him was a long-distance telephone message conveying the news that was to startle everybody next morning. He said "By getting out, putting two and two together, laying a train of inquiries and waiting and finally by a lucky encounter, that is how I got the plum firmly and solely in the basket."

Scoops are obtained quite unexpectedly. I got them off and on as I mastered the technique of news getting. A good friend met me while I was having a morning stroll and blurted out quite innocently that opium was being mixed with toddy and sold in certain parts of Bombay Province and that he was going to put a series of questions on the subject in the old Bombay Legislative Council. I tried to get further clues from him just sufficient for my purpose and then I started my own inquiries in official circles. Yes we contemplate taking action very shortly against the dealers of toddy who are guilty of mixing opium with the stuff that they sell. said an official in a conversation with me. That was quite enough for my purpose. My paper splashed that news which doubtless created a stir in official circles. The then Excise Commissioner Mr J P Brander (I do not mind mentioning his name) was greatly puzzled as to how the news got to the public ears. He asked my editor in my presence as to the source of my information. The editor questioned me just to satisfy the curiosity of Mr Brander although he knew that no journalist would ever divulge the source of his information. I have obtained my news from certain quarters which I have no reason to doubt and it is quite correct. was my laconic reply to the editor and he did not question me further. Subsequently after the departure of the Excise Commissioner I told my editor in strict confidence the source of my information and he agreed with me that I was quite right in not divulging the source of it in the presence of Mr Brander.

8

MORE ABOUT EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS

It is generally believed by laymen that it is not difficult to get exclusive news stories. I shall presently show that it is not so. News-getting is a very difficult art over which you may have to spend a good deal of your precious time. Sometimes a good story or a first class scoop may give you a very anxious time to obtain, and when you have secured it, you must make sure of your facts. Of course, given the facts, the story itself will not take much time to be written up. In trying to ascertain your facts you may have to put up with rebuff and even insult. You have to pocket all that in the best interests of your newspaper. In other words, you should be a thick-skinned journalist.

While I was special correspondent at Karachi reporting the session of the Indian National Congress which, as you may remember, delegated Mr. Gandhi to present India's case, of course from the point of view of the Congress, at the second Round Table Conference in London, I got a story which I knew no other newspaper correspondent had. I learned that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was going to oppose tooth and nail the resolution authorising Mr. Gandhi to go to London. I telegraphed the story to my newspaper and it splashed it on the front page the same evening. To obtain that story I had to spend three good hours in

the Congress Camp and was driven from pillar to post. But eventually I had my reward.

On another occasion I learned from private sources of the arrival in Bombay of Lord Meston (formerly known as Sir James Meston Lt Governor of the United Provinces). I was told that His Lordship would be in the City only for a couple of hours. I had moreover very little time at my disposal and was on the point of missing the story. I hurriedly drove to Ballard Pier and found Lord Meston sitting leisurely in the boat train. I rushed into his compartment and had a chat with him. He knew what questions I was going to ask him. The country at that time had been feeling quite uneasy over the question of what was known as the Meston Award. His Lordship was a bit alarmed as I flourished my note book to take down verbatim all that he was about to say. My idea was to be accurate. He gave me a long story in less than an hour, and I rushed it to my evening paper. Lord Meston had suggested the lines on which the difficulty experienced in implementing the Meston Award could be overcome.

You seldom get plums for the good news stories obtained. In the event of these stories being found inaccurate you are taken to task and even threatened the sack.

Some persons whom you interview dread your note book and therefore you have to make mental notes of the conversation. To my mind it is often risky to trust your memory far too much. In this respect F W Wilson scored over his rivals to the great astonishment of his colleagues during his stay in

Bombay City as editor of **The Indian Daily Mail**. On one occasion he skilfully interviewed Mr Vithalbhai Patel at his residence and reproduced the whole conversation in his "Scrutator" columns the next day

Mr Wilson used to tell us in his leisure hours how he manoeuvred to get scoops for **The Daily Mail** (London) and how he was shown the cold shoulder by his Fleet Street colleagues. Any way he taught us real journalism of which we were wholly unaware

This reminds me of what I have heard of the efforts of Mr Wickham Steed who, I am told, has been lucky enough from time to time, to get "big news" of international interest, not because he was looking for it or had made special plans to get it. It came 'o him as it were, by accident. "The wider a journalist's interests are, the likelier will such accidents be," according to Mr Steed. Let me illustrate this

In May, 1907, a diplomat with whom Mr Steed had been playing golf gave him, in a fit of anger, the biggest sort of news. How did he get it? Irritated by something Mr Steed had written—and not having understood it—he called him several kinds of a donkey and, by way of proving Mr Steed's stupidity, blurted out a "highly explosive secret." A diplomatic plot was afoot to isolate Great Britain and Italy and to smash the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 by bringing France and Russia into line with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Mr Steed used that information very discreetly, so as not to compromise his informant. The result was a diplomatic storm of the first magnitude. But the plot was foiled. The plotters then made secret inquiries into the possible source of Mr

Steed's information. So hot were they on the scent that the indiscreet diplomat felt bound to clear himself of suspicion by declaring in an official report that it was Mr Steed who had informed him!

Another instance of Mr Steed's journalistic exploits occurred in March 1909 when he was correspondent of *The Times* (London) in Vienna. The European crisis brought on by the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1908 had reached its climax. War seemed imminent. Austro-Hungarian armies were mobilised against Serbia on the south east and other armies against Russia on the north east. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand the Austro-Hungarian Heir Apparent and Inspector General of the army was due to leave Vienna that evening to take command of the operations against Serbia. The whole of Europe indeed the whole world was anxiously awaiting the turn of events in the well founded fear that hostilities between Austria-Hungary and Serbia might bring on a general European war.

Mr Steed met a visitor at a party who was profusely apologetic for being late there as he had been detained on account of an important engagement of an international nature. The Archduke who was with him had told the visitor that everything would be settled peacefully, that the danger of war was over and that he was not going to the front. The visitor repeated that story quite unconsciously to Mr Steed and the latter used it the same day. Mr Steed thrilled the world by announcing that he had strong reasons

to believe that the danger of war was over That was news of outstanding importance, indeed!

It has to be borne in mind that most journalists who have managed to get first class scoops without sacrificing something of their independence could cite similar instances of adventure from their own experiences News has to be worked for and gleaned in many ways As I have repeatedly stated, it comes quite unexpectedly to those who are capable of working it up, without frills, of course.

In an unguarded moment, Sir C V Raman, the famous scientist, once blurted out to me a story which I cannot forget, though he mentioned it to me some 18 years ago He had just arrived in Bombay en route to Europe, and I was told that he had been working very studiously on his then recent discoveries, which he was going to explain, in detail, after his arrival in England "I am very busy, I am afraid, I cannot see you at present You may take your chance on some other occasion after my return to India from England," said the famous scientist, whom I approached for an interview "What are you busy with, Sir?" I asked And Sir C V Raman gave me a bare outline of his most recent discovery That was quite enough for my purpose. Thus, I had the consolation of getting out of him something which I had first thought I would not be able to get for my paper Sir C V Raman, I must say, always treated journalists very fairly

‘Please report the speech of Mr verbatim for our newspaper. A reporter is sometimes asked to carry out instructions to this effect. To my mind, such instructions are simply preposterous. I do not wish to use a harsher word. Let me dwell on this matter in detail.

In this country there are very few speakers in a position to address public meetings in faultless English. To report their speeches verbatim is not at all possible if taken down accurately in shorthand they would not make pleasant reading. I am referring to speeches delivered in so called ‘Kings English’. It is not often known to what extent the reporter has to labour with a view to polishing up the language of the speaker while reporting or condensing his speech. The speaker ought to thank the reporter for this little service done to him.

Mr Charles Ross, Chief Reporter of *The Times*, giving evidence before the Select Committee on Parliamentary Reporting as far back as 1878 was asked by the Chairman ‘Is it your opinion that members are as a rule rather grateful to reporters for sometimes putting their language in a little better order than that in which it was delivered?’ And what was Mr Ross’s reply? ‘Owing to the nature of the man

ner in which the reports are carried on now, that is not done as well as it should be, but in some instances I should think they are very glad to have a report, instead of what is called a *verbatim* report, which is a horrible thing' Let this answer be borne in mind well by those speakers who occasionally indulge in the habit of approaching the reporters at public meetings with a request to report them *verbatim* or even fully

"I suppose there are a few members in the House of Commons whose speeches you profess to report *verbatim* in *The Times*?" Mr Ross was further asked "No, not *verbatim*, I hope, I do not think there is any one who is reported *verbatim* You see a speech done at great length, and you are not conscious of any little alteration—improvements in the language or the construction of a sentence, it should be done, and I trust it is done, that is the reporter's duty"

"What kind of reporting do you call that?"—"I call that full reporting, accurate reporting *Verbatim* reporting the speaker would think far from accurate"

Whilst reporting a speech it is advisable to give all the arguments of the speaker, and his views The speaker, as is common knowledge, often goes on repeating his opinions Would that add to the strength of the argument when you come to read the speech? A critical newspaper reader might describe such a speech as worthless and the speaker as a third-rate one

I am citing another great authority in support of my contention that *verbatim* reporting does not at all

exist in this country or for that matter, anywhere in the world

Mr John Lowell a man of considerable practical experience as manager of the Press Association (London) is of the opinion that the report of a speech should not be slavishly verbatim He agrees with Mr Ross that abridged reports read far better than full reports

It should be remembered in this connection that the newspaper reader unless he is an arm chair critic having plenty of leisure to criticise has no time to go through lengthy reports of speeches What he wants is a good summary a readable summary not omitting the views expressed by the speakers

In 1888 general complaints having been heard about Hansard both Houses of Parliament appointed another committee to inquire into the publishing of the debates of Parliament Among the persons or shall I say experts who came forward to give evidence before that body was the late Mr Hansard himself as he had had long experience of parliamentary reporting Asked whether he would explain what he proposed to do Mr Hansard said that most people knew what a full report was it was different from a verbatim report Many honourable members would be very much astonished if they saw a verbatim report of what they had said the night previous

Would the shorthand writer literally report every word? — He would if he wanted it But there is no such thing done? — There is no such thing either in the United States or in France or in Italy or anywhere Mr Hansard was definitely of the opinion

that an actually *verbatim* report was very seldom obtained, except in the case of a very great speaker like Mr Gladstone

Coming nearer home, it is indeed a pleasure to report a first-rate speaker like the late Right Hon Srimivasa Sastri, but it is very difficult to report a very fast speaker like Sir S Radhakrishnan. The latter knows full well how he presents a troublesome task to the press. Moreover, the speeches of the latter are highly philosophical, though short, not lasting more than half an hour. But in that period he speaks to the extent of three to four columns. Now all that cannot possibly be reproduced in newspapers. Mr Sastri was decidedly easy to follow, both on account of his style and moderate speed.

“Would you make grammatical alterations in a judgment?” This question was put to Mr Thomas Allen Reed, the veteran shorthand writer and reporter, who had reported all sorts of men—statesmen, lawyers, scientists and doctors. “Yes” replied Mr Reed, “even a judgment may need a little verbal editing.” I wonder if any reporter has ever attempted to edit a judgment in this country. I know only this. Many years ago, a reporter of an English newspaper, I forget his name at the moment, ventured to alter the phraseology in a High Court judgment, the full text of which came into his possession for summarising. He thought that the Judge had committed a grammatical error. When the attention of the Registrar was drawn to that “correction,” the reporter was taken to task for what he had done. The fact of the matter was that the reporter was wrong and the Judge was right. “The

correction was absolutely uncalled for At any rate that was by no means good reporting

I do not mean to suggest that Judges are absolutely infallible persons But it is no part of the reporter's duty to correct Their Lordships judgments in the original texts He is, of course at liberty to summarise them

10 REPORTING—A FASCINATING JOB

I have sometimes been asked funny questions by laymen about the craft to which I have the honour to belong "Is it necessary—absolutely necessary—to pass through the reporting stage before going to higher stages? Can't I become assistant editor straightway when I am confident that I am able to write?" These are some of the typical questions which cannot be answered without going into them thoroughly You cannot always dream of reaching the top of the ladder without climbing the steps leading to that ultimate stage I might add that for some reason or other a tyro is reluctant to be a reporter, he thinks that it is below his dignity to work as a reporter A man who entertains such belief had better go in for some other calling

Edgar Wallace—A Reporter

When he was asked which of all his occupations—author, dramatist, play and film producer, reporter, racing journalist, etc—was nearest his heart, the late Mr Edgar Wallace said "I would like best to be known as a reporter, and best to be employed on crime work, as in my reporter days I claim to be that last reporter, in the Street (Fleet Street)—all others are journalists" The reporter is the man—and nowadays the woman—who goes out for news, and news is the

basis of the successful newspaper. There is not the least doubt that in many ways it is the most interesting job in journalism.

On more than one occasion in the last 26 years I was offered a job in another branch of journalism, but I had to decline it with thanks for the simple reason that reporting is to my mind, the most fascinating of all the branches of the craft. For instance, a sub editor who works in the office loses that which is the vital breath of the journalist—contact with life. As a reporter, you are at perfect liberty to approach any politician of note or even a high personage. Without let or hindrance you can ask him any question unless of course it is not too personal. All you have to bear in mind is that you should not make yourself a nuisance to him.

Ever since the first crude essays in the production of newspapers were made the reporter has faced hazard and hardship in his quest of news and often the enterprising newsmen has had to run risks to win the prizes of his calling. Fortunately the days when ears were cut off when the pillory and whipping at the cart's tail were the favourite sentences of a Judge Jeffreys on the hapless journalist have long since gone by and the reporter today has fair field for his zeal.

The last century has witnessed a great transformation in the reporter's work. Today the gamut of news is bigger than ever. It extends from reporting an inquest by the City Coroner to High Court reporting from reporting a Bombay Municipal Corporation meeting to reporting a meeting of the Central Legislative Assembly from reporting an ordinary social

gathering to describing a Government House Ball, and so on. The range between the extremes of the world's news, as it is garnered day by day, is a field of work full of variety and interest, often prosaic, sometimes alluring and romantic, but always to the real craftsman presenting objectives worthy of patient, sincere and self-sacrificing effort.

It is perhaps too much to hope that among the beginners of today there is another George Augustus Sala who possessed that quality in the same degree. It is stated that on the morning when news came of the assassination of Emperor Alexander II the following instructions were sent to Sala by the editor of **The Daily Telegraph** (London) "Write a leader on the price of fish at Billingsgate and go to St Petersburg in the evening" Those who knew Lord Northcliffe remember how his orders were equally sudden and surprising Writing about those orders an American journalist says "The reporter is angling daily in the vast reservoir of potential thrills He deals with stuff that is stranger than fiction The real reporter is a strange animal In appearance he is often shiftless and cynical. In unimportant matters he is at times unreliable He is given to romancing with his fellows. His manner of living does not always click with conventions Yet when the test comes—when the big story breaks—he galvanises instantly into the most dynamic and efficient of human beings His poses and artificialities are gone He quivers for the chase He is a news hound"

Interviewing

When the reporter is assigned the work of interviewing a high personage, it is expected of him to

know the subject on which he is to gather his views otherwise it is not worth while undertaking such a job. The interview has it must be remembered a prominent place in the reporter's scheme of things. I have always made it a habit to prepare myself thoroughly before setting out to see a person. It is interesting to note how great journalists differ in their methods. De Blowitz the famous correspondent, and a great interviewer gives this advice 'When a man gives a correspondent an important piece of information the latter should remain with him for some time change the conversation and not leave him until it has turned to something quite insignificant. If the correspondent takes his departure abruptly a flash of caution will burst upon his informant. He will reflect rapidly and beg the journalist not to repeat what he has said until he sees him again. The information would be lost and the correspondent would suffer an annoyance that might have been avoided if he had heard nothing. A newspaper has no use for confidential communications which it cannot transmit to its readers.'

Taken Unawares'

Sometimes while interviewing a person you are likely to be floored if you fail to grasp the point which he is trying to make out. About 15 years ago I remember how Mr. Gandhi took me absolutely unawares when I asked him for an interview. I was admitted into his chamber at Mani Bhuvan Gamdevi (Bombay) when he was taking his usual frugal meal 'Sit down young man, what can I do for you?'—he asked me. Will you be good enough to explain your

position in regard to the Congress Working Committee's resolution passed yesterday?"—I asked. "Yes, take down this" Interviewed, Mr. Gandhi said that he had no views on the subject "Thank you" I was taken aback by that laconic reply It was only when I pressed him further that he came out with a statement.

I have often found it rather embarrassing to interview persons who, though they are very anxious to have their views on subjects with which they are well acquainted published in newspapers pretend to keep the reporter at arms length. As soon as the latter approaches them they make funny gestures as though they never seek publicity. Believe me it has never been a delight to interview such persons. Left to myself I would not even care to approach them. Duty however sometimes compels us to give them publicity which they do not deserve. In other parts of the world they would be taught a lesson they would never forget.

Unsavoury Matter

I do not wish to indulge in personalities. Unfortunately for me, some of the persons concerned are yet in our midst, and I do not wish to offend them in any way. A leading politician in this country was passing through Bombay and I was deputed by my paper to see him in connection with a matter which was then the burning topic of the day. Oh you press men!' he exclaimed on seeing me. He appeared to me as if he was cursing me. 'Am I a nuisance to you, sir?' If so I do not wish to bother you at all. I said No not a bit you are quite welcome to ask me any question you like he replied. 'Then why these ges

tures signifying your disgust, sir?" I asked in surprise. If the politician had been alone at the time, I would have given him a bit of my mind, but as he was accompanied by his wife, I did not like to be caustic. "What I mean to say is this You people are an inquisitive lot It is risky to open one's mouth in your presence. But since you are here, you might ask me any question bearing on the matter with which I am concerned," replied the politician.

Earl Winterton

It has been stated by a famous journalist that a politician should always be accessible to the press, he might be busy with his own affairs, but if a reporter calls on him, he should not waste his time and ask him straightway what he wants No pressman would like to waste the time of any politician because that is not the policy of the press Let me give you another instance which is quite in contrast to the one I have referred to.

It was a Friday morning about 5-45 when I knocked at the cabin door of Earl Winterton aboard a ship. It was, I think, shortly before the Round Table Conferences held in England Earl Winterton, then Under Secretary for India, was coming out to study the situation first-hand Attired in his dressing gown, with a half shaven beard, His Lordship, in response to my constant knocks, came out of the cabin and wished me "Good morning, my friend, what can I do for you?" he inquired "Good morning, sir, I am a representative of **The Indian Daily Mail**" That was quite enough for Earl Winterton to know the object of my visit, he did not wish me apparently to proceed further. "Well, I

nave had a very pleasant voyage and am looking forward to meeting quite a number of my friends in this country Good bye So saying Lord Winterton returned to his cabin But he was not fussy He did not mince matters He knew what I was after He was quite cheerful and did not make any angry gestures

On another occasion the late King Nadirshah (who was then on the road to becoming the ruler of Afghanistan) had arrived in Bombay en route to his country This time I was not all alone but was in the company of my colleagues Except for the fact that the police at first prevented us from approaching the great man everything passed off smoothly He was, indeed a very charming man to talk to Above all he was quite frank I still remember his remark to a Government official who saw him aboard a ship But tell me what is in your heart? And the official's reply was equally frank

Take yet another instance A well known Maharaja had just returned from his European tour and I had been commanded by my news editor to see him at the Taj Mahal Hotel I sent in my visiting card, and in less than two minutes his secretary presented me to His Highness who was then in the hands of his barber Come right in' he said and our conversation proceeded—the barber of course listening with delight all the while My fear was obvious I felt that if the barber was more attentive to our conversation than to his operations something untoward might happen Fortunately, however that did not occur and after a very pleasant chat I thanked His Highness and left

Vulgar to Give Interviews

Whenever I went to the Bombay residence of the late Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose, the world-famous scientist, I could hardly restrain my laughter. This scientist always had a bulky book of press-cuttings—cuttings relating to the reports of the numerous interviews he had given throughout the world. He used to place it before me and tell me to make such use of the cuttings as I thought best. "It is vulgar to give an interview. I don't like it." This was, as it were, his stock remark to the press. Nevertheless, the press had had ample material to write about his discoveries, etc., with the help of those cuttings. He was, no doubt, a nice man and had a good press whenever he visited Bombay. The press liked him because he always respected its representatives.

Take it from me, the press will not go out of its way to offend any person, no matter what position in life he occupies, as long as that person does not unnecessarily irritate the press. I must say that in this country there are several politicians and even others whom it is, indeed, a great pleasure to interview.

In this respect, the late Mr. C. F. Andrews was quite an agreeable person to deal with. He knew the requirements of the press, having been a voluminous writer himself. If, for instance, he came to Bombay from Simla, Mr. Andrews would invariably begin by saying, "The Rev. C. F. Andrews, who arrived in Bombay from Simla by the Frontier Mail on Friday morning, looked very tired after the journey, said . . . " Whatever he said was good "copy."

The late Rt Hon Srinivasa Sastri was very particular about giving every facility to the press. I once saw him at the residence of Mr Gharpure an advocate of the Bombay High Court. He asked me what I wanted and straightway wrote out a most readable and lucid statement for me. Even when he had to make a big speech he never forgot the requirements of the press and as far as possible sent copies of his speech to the various newspapers in time to summarise. A very fine man whom the press always respected!

Some of my colleagues are of the opinion that it is not desirable to show your "copy" to the person interviewed before it is published. Perhaps they think that it is not journalistic etiquette to let him know what you are going to publish about the conversation you have had with him. That may be so, but I feel it would be advisable for the journalist to be on the safe side and show his "copy" to the interviewed. This practice need not be followed in regard to every interview, but it is worthwhile adhering to it in the case of important ones. "Safety first" is a motto which might be adopted by every journalist.

As Lord Riddell once declared in a speech, interviewing like cross-examination is an art, but the journalist, unlike the barrister, cannot exercise compulsion. The witness must answer all relevant questions, while the interviewed is under no such obligation. Therefore, a journalist has to adapt himself to the situation in dealing with unwilling or untruthful individuals. He can well use his persuasive powers, if any, if he feels that the interviewed is rather reluctant to say certain things. The interviewed need have no fears that he will be misrepresented.

This reminds me of the observation once made by the late M. Briand, the famous French statesman. Speaking of reporters he said "We are old friends, old

neighbours old lovers old fighters you and I and will be to the grave You have represented me misrepresented me been my loud speaker, the painters of my character the critics of my words the cog in the wheel, the stone in my shoe a body of men I cannot do without which is indissolubly knit with my fame my name and my public life Crush round me I will never rebuke you Get what crumbs you can! You will make loaves from them But let me pass now, for I have my train to catch and a Frenchman must never miss his train to Paris!'

These are indeed very nice sentiments but all statesmen are not of his type Some get easily offended even if the slightest inaccuracy creeps into the published interview

Memorise Interviews

Some journalists are averse to taking notes while interviewing persons they memorise and then reproduce the entire interview Frankly speaking I have memorised an interview only once That was the occasion when accompanied by another colleague, Mr G V Sirur who is unfortunately no more with us I had a chat with Mr Jaisukhlal K Mehta the energetic and well informed Secretary of the Indian Merchants Chamber who had just returned to India after a European tour Mr Mehta gave us his impressions of his visit to Whitehall where he had seen Mr Wedgwood Benn then Secretary of State for India He very graphically described how Mr Benn showed his nervousness whilst talking by throwing away lighted and half smoked cigarette after cigarette a habit with which we are all familiar When we went to see Mr

Mehta the latter showed his unwillingness to be interviewed, and we promised him that nothing would appear in our respective newspapers about the conversation. The same evening, however, a newspaper came out with a summary of the interview. I was taken aback, and I at once 'phoned up Mr Mehta, who relieved me of the promise, and 'thus I was able to reproduce from memory the talk, at greater length, in my newspaper.

A Risky Process

As I have already hinted before, it is risky—sometimes very risky—to trust your memory too much. De Blowitz had an amazingly retentive memory. He never made notes and used to say that in France to hold a notebook in your hand and take down the words spoken was an invaluable method for learning simply nothing.

Against this is to be set the view of Mr James O'Donnell Bennett, an experienced reporter of **The Chicago Tribune**, who is of the opinion that it is fair to an important man to take copious notes, because direct quotations of precisely what he says are more effective than a pale rewrite of it. He sincerely believes that pencil and book do not scare, but flatter a man, who immediately thinks the occasion momentous and inwardly feels he must give of his best to the reporter.

Another American, Mr Marcossom, who has probably interviewed more big men all over the world than any other journalist, says 'You must make men talk who are not accustomed to speak about themselves or their work, and when your man is once

launched into his story it is fatal to interrupt. Men like Eric Geddes have a sequence that is one reason why they get things done. To my mind, interviewers often fail because they digress or permit their 'victims' to digress. As Mr Marcossom points out concentration is a virtue. Each human being is a law unto himself. The more distinguished or famous a man becomes the more distinct becomes his individuality. It would have been impossible to get anything from Lloyd George with the same line of attack that you employ to make Douglas Hogg break his chronic silence. Each of these remarkable men required an entirely different line of approach based upon knowledge of their work, interests, ambition and personality, together with a swift appraisal of the mood of the hour, of the march of events. Nearly every public man has a vulnerable point in his armour.

'Mob Interviews'

I am one of those who believe that it is best to avoid interviewing big persons with a group of journalists. You would be at a distinct disadvantage in asking your choice questions; you would have to wait for your turn. It might not even come or when it does come you may find that the question you intended to ask the interviewed has been already answered. When ever Pandit Motilal Nehru, the father of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, arrived in Bombay the reporters actually mobbed him, and asked him questions for which they received sarcastic replies. Sometimes Pandit Motilal was more than a match for the press. His replies were always to the point, never rambling.

and very seldom occasioned supplementary questions. Of late, I find that Pandit Jawaharlal is also similarly treated by the journalists for whom special sittings are arranged by the local Congress Committee, or shall I say, by our ever-obliging friend and erstwhile working journalist, Mr S K Patil.

Whilst I deprecate such interviews—"mob interviews," as one would justifiably call them—very often one has no choice when one has been asked by the boss to go and interview Jawaharlal along with other journalists. In the case of famous persons English and American journalists also adopt this practice, because the former are anxious to save their time as much as possible by making general statements to the press, and answering a few questions. Well, that's that—so far as interviews are concerned.

13 LAW REPORTING-SOME PITFALLS

The difficulties experienced by press reporters in law courts are enormous. In the first place they must take great care to see that whatever cases they report are impartially and accurately reported. There are several pitfalls in court reporting which must be avoided. It does not at all pay to report a case which you think is of a doubtful nature. A party may have put up a got up case to harass another party—and there are numerous such cases—with the sole object of exposing it in the newspapers and if the reporters report it they are sure to get into hot water.

In the second place the reporters great anxiety in the law courts is to follow intelligibly the proceedings of cases. It is for this reason that the press has reserved seats in the law courts. Very often these seats are usurped by do nothing lawyers and the press is thus put to great inconvenience. On several occasions I have had to make the lawyers of that type get up from the reserved seat when I found that they were reluctant to leave it of their own accord. This process no doubt, creates unpleasantness but to my mind when you are faced with an awkward situation you would be perfectly justified in incurring the displeasure of a person who has no right to harass you.

Another difficulty which the press invariably experiences in the law courts is in regard to defective hearing of the proceedings of cases. How often have you heard a judge asking a lawyer to speak up? Sometimes even judges themselves speak in whispers, and it is difficult to follow them. Imagine the lot of the reporters in these circumstances! It is all very well for counsel or a judge or a magistrate to remark that he has not been sufficiently well reported in the newspapers. How can he be reported at length?

Uncomplimentary Remarks

Many years ago, High Court reporters were in the habit of importing criticism into their reports in order to make them lively and sensational. Mr Justice Budruddin Tyabji, when at the Bar, was once engaged to defend a prisoner who was tried at the Criminal Sessions of the High Court, presided over by Mr Justice Westropp. Mr. Tyabji conducted the defence ably, and obtained from the jury a verdict of "not guilty" for his client, who was acquitted. The next morning **The Bombay Gazette**, now defunct, described Mr. Tyabji's address to the jury in somewhat uncomplimentary terms.

Mr Justice Westropp, on taking his seat on the Bench the next day, addressed Mr Tyabji as follows with reference to what that newspaper had said about his address: "Mr Tyabji, I am glad to see you here, and also the reporter of **The Bombay Gazette**, as I wish to make some observations upon the report of the case which was concluded yesterday. The paper represents you to have made a rigmarole and a non-sensical address in defence of your client. As these

remarks are not only unfair but likely to do harm to a young barrister I deem it my duty to observe that, in my opinion there is not the slightest foundation for those remarks I consider that the case was most ably conducted by you and that the acquittal of the prisoner was mainly due to the ability and skill with which you addressed the jury'

In those days the reporters not infrequently came into direct conflict with the Bench and the Bar Fortunately for the press today, such instances are very rare

It is no part of the duty of the reporter to incorporate his own views in his copy If he is desirous of expressing his own views or making comments on any incident he would be well advised to do so in the editorial columns of his paper

Reporter Should be Above Suspicion

It has been remarked, and I think rightly so that the barrister may do his utmost to make one view of the facts prevail although he, too is expected not to say anything that would deliberately mislead the court But however much of a partisan he may be he has an opponent who is equally determined to bring out the other view of the case so that the court does get both aspects laid before it The individual lawyer may not be above suspicion but the reporter must be He stands for accuracy his main business is not to promote anybody's cause, he has to present things as they are

While on the staff of **The Indian Daily Mail**, there befell two important incidents which I shall never forget. Bombay City was in the grip of the strike of textile workers and personally, I felt that they had a legitimate grievance, but were misled by some of their leaders, and day after day I had to go to the mill area to find out the latest position. In those days we went out in a party and met again later in the day to exchange notes. It so happened that one fine morning, I think it was a Saturday, I was all alone on the Curry Road Bridge, the danger spot at the time, and was on my way to the DeLisle Road Police Station to check up certain stories I had gathered. A group of strikers had noticed me come out of a mill and pursued me till I reached the middle of the bridge. Two of them confronted me quite suddenly and asked me why I had gone inside the mill. Before I would argue with them, two others rapidly came up, slapped me on the back, abused me and took to their heels. I thought the situation might become menacing if I stopped there any longer. I hurriedly made for the Police Station and reported the matter there.

News spread amongst my colleagues that I had been "mercilessly assaulted" and taken to hospital.

That afternoon an evening contemporary came out with a bill Bombay Reporter Assaulted in Mill Area When I mentioned that incident to my editor he asked me to write fully about it Our bill however was wholly different from that of our contemporary

A Sad Tale

The other incident—more sensational in character—happened shortly after the arrest of Mr Gandhi for violation of the salt law The scene was the Azad Maidan With me on the maidan were Mr Negley Farson of the Chicago Daily News and Mr Karl Ketchum of the London Daily Express The sight which I noticed in company with my colleagues and those foreign journalists was an unforgettable one I had better describe it in the words of Mr Farson

My dispatch on the fearful maidan beating where about 400 Indians were taken to hospital and a jatha of 25 Sikhs were beaten almost insensible—because they had come there to sacrifice themselves and not hit back—that dispatch was held up by the Bombay Censors for eight hours I did not find this out until seven hours after I thought that my first takes had gone We stood within ten feet of the Sikh Jatha when it was being beaten We saw its brave leader fall again and again with blood streaming down his face and we saw the British sergeant of police who sweating so that the perspiration was coming through his white tunic finally refuse to hit him He dropped down his lathi We all saw how Indian women dressed in their orange-coloured saris flung themselves on the bridles of the charging mounted

police—how a Sikh mother held up her own baby for the police to hit—how Hindu stretcher-bearers rushed out to place a stretcher beside a group of men who refused to move, and were taking the rain of blows on their hands over their heads. That was, indeed, a terrible sight."

I remember, how Mr Fred Wilson, who witnessed the beating of the Congress satyagrahis in the Fort area and at Wadala, filled his "Scrutator" columns with graphic descriptions of what he had seen. Day after day, he thundered in those columns giving informative stories "Phew," Farson used to say, "all this is full of blood" In those days the journalists had a very busy time, they kept the whole world informed of occurrences in Bombay.

15 MY "FAMOUS" VISIT TO BHUJ

Look here keep your eyes and ears open! These were the last words of Mr K Natarajan editor of The Indian Daily Mail who preceded Mr Wilson before I left for Bhuj. The occasion was the visit of Lord Irwin then Viceroy, to the territory of His Highness the Maharao of Cutch. And, indeed, I scrupulously adhered to the instrument of instructions during my stay in the capital of the State.

To begin with the boat which took me to that great State was a third class ship which could not provide for its passengers even reasonable comforts. I had to travel in such a ship as the time at my disposal was very short. At any rate, it was my maiden trip to that place and I had been told beforehand some good stories about the State. When I reached Mandvi, two days after I sailed I felt that it would not be 'smooth sailing' as the arrangements made for me were far from satisfactory. Fortunately for me, I met an acquaintance during the trip who was a subject of His Highness and who promised to send a telegram to the Private Secretary of the Maharao informing him of our arrival at Mandvi.

My First Impressions

When my friend received no reply to his telegram I became nervous. I thought that my editor

had made a mistake in not informing the State authorities in advance of my visit. Any how we left for Bhuj the next day. What an awful journey it was! I shall never forget it. My first impressions of the capital of the State were not at all favourable.

I was told that as soon as I reached Bhuj I should call on the Dewan to whom I was given a note by the editor. "Good morning, your Excellency, I am Special Correspondent of **The Indian Daily Mail**, deputed in connection with the Viceregal visit to Bhuj." That was how I introduced myself to the Dewan. "You are welcome. I hope you will have a nice time here," replied the Dewan.

A Backward City

And what a nice time it was! I wish I could describe the whole thing fully. Leaving the house of the Dewan, I went round to see what arrangements had been made for the Viceroy. I saw that everything possible was being done to make Lord Irwin's visit an enjoyable one. After all, it was a brief stay, and the State had appointed several committees to go into the whole affair with meticulous care.

When I returned to Bombay, my editor asked me to write my impressions, and I wrote out a three-column article which was featured on the edit page. I wonder what the State authorities thought of that stuff, but it, doubtless, contained a good deal of frank speaking.

After that, I think, I had not the good fortune to visit any other State. I forgot to mention earlier that I had also visited Baroda long before my memorable visit to Bhuj. That was on the occasion of the golden

jubilee celebrations of His late Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar I must say that was a grand affair and I was treated very well indeed

My Hard Earned Money

Now I do not think I have left out any important item or incident during the time I was either on *The Sanj Vartaman*, or on *The Bombay Chronicle* or *The Indian Daily Mail*. But before I close the first part of my recollections I wish to say a few words about the latter newspaper which deprived me of my hard earned money amounting to over a thousand rupees. The company had to be wound up and the staff eventually got very little out of the residue of the assets.

I sometimes feel that it would have been better if I had not joined that unfortunate paper at all. On the other hand I would not and could not have got the experience of various matters if I had not been taken on the staff of that paper. But the editor who was responsible for teaching us how to get news for our paper was Mr. Wilson. As I have stated before every morning as he entered his room he shouted at the top of his voice 'ANY NEWS?' He was for news and nothing but news. I am still of the opinion that if the paper had been better managed and better controlled by a person himself a journalist it would not have died at all. As it was a first class newspaper suddenly disappeared from the Fleet Street of Bombay unwept and unsung leaving its hard working staff in misery.

I have sometimes heard it said that some of the Indian newspapers indulge in what is known as "yellow journalism". This characterisation is more applicable, to my mind, to some of the Indian-owned newspapers

The Indian press, as I have said elsewhere in this book, has yet to learn certain good things from the European press and avoid certain others, which are positively harmful to India

There was a time in the somewhat hectic career of the Indian press when slanderous and libellous attacks used to be hurled against all and sundry. It was, indeed, surprising that they were tolerated in those days. Perhaps the editors of newspapers in those days held a different view of the freedom of the press from the view being held by their modern confreres. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru very rightly states "The freedom of the press does not consist in our permitting such things as we like to appear. Even a tyrant is agreeable to this type of freedom. Civil liberty and freedom of the press consist in our permitting what we do not like, in our putting up with criticisms of ourselves, in our allowing public expressions of view which seem to us even to be injurious to our cause itself. If Indian journalism really wants to serve the people, it must improve its

tone and technique so as to be more than a mere party propaganda machine. It is regrettable that journalism in India as a whole, (and Hindi and Urdu journalism, in particular) is deteriorating both in taste and language and instead of being educative and instructive it is full of abuse and propaganda. I think the Congress leader is perfectly justified in the view he takes of the freedom of the press and if his advice were followed there is no doubt the Indian press would be marching ahead on the safe path towards freedom.

Prof Max Muller

In this connection the All India Newspaper Editors Conference has also advised the press to refrain from indulging in 'yellow journalism'. It does not pay anybody to carry on a ceaseless controversy over a matter with which the general public are not concerned at all. What they want, and want very badly is if I may say so in the words of Prof Max Muller news and nothing but news. The reading public would be perfectly justified in ignoring the unwarranted criticism of some public incidents in the editorial columns of a newspaper. Prof Max-Muller recalling the days in which he lived points out in his autobiography. At that time newspapers were really read for the news which they contained not for the leading and misleading articles, and all the rest. What happy time it was when a newspaper consisted of a sheet or half a sheet in quarto with short paragraphs about actual events which had often taken place weeks and months before. Shall we ever, as long as there are newspapers, have peace again—

peace between the great nations of the world, peace between the contending parties, and peace at home, which are now so ruthlessly broken in upon, nay, swallowed up by those paper giants, most unwelcome yet irresistible callers, just when we want to settle down to a quiet day's work?"

In his now famous book, "My Experiences With Truth," Gandhiji writes practically in the same vein. "The newspaper press," says Gandhiji, "is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole country-sides, and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. It can be profitable only when exercised from within."

That really is the correct position which the press in this country should take up. Just as an uncontrolled pen is positively harmful to the public it slashes, so is the uncontrolled press, which criticises the public in season and out of season.

17 HISTORY OF INDIAN JOURNALISM

It would be, I think not out of place if I sketched in this book a brief history of Indian journalism which is not widely known in this country. The growth of journalistic and literary activity among the people of India is a subject of absorbing interest. The annual output of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and books even about a century ago was very considerable in quantity; it is indeed much more so now. Though much of the work produced was unimportant, modern India has given birth to able journalists and authors. I need hardly mention their names because they are widely known. Suffice it to say, that it is those journalists who have well and truly laid the foundation of modern journalism in India and it is now for the present generation to build a structure which can weather the storms ahead.

In a free India there is of course ample scope for Indian newspapers to thrive provided they are well managed. I may have some thing to write about honest journalism during the days of my retirement which I guess are now not far off. In doing so my only desire is to be of some service to my young colleagues in the profession who I think should know what are commonly known as the pitfalls of journalism so that they can well avoid them.

Before I come to the historical portion of journalism, I wish to say something about vernacular journalism. Frankly, I attach very great importance to this branch of journalism, for it has in the very near future great scope to expand its activity. I hope I shall be excused for giving expression to my honest opinion about it. Having begun my career on a vernacular newspaper—and a good many journalists in this country have similarly begun theirs—I know some of its good and weak points. It is a pity that mud-slinging, very often verging on indecent journalism, has not at all been checked by some of the vernacular newspapers. While reading them—of course there are some exceptions—I feel that the law of libel and slander is completely disregarded. I wonder how many people are really interested in the “dirty linen that is washed in public” by these journals from time to time.

Slandorous Attack

Sometimes one finds several columns devoted to a slanderous attack on a person who may have offended the religious susceptibilities of a community. I suppose the reading public is disgusted with what is being dished out from day today.

There is, to my mind, enough room for these newspapers to improve, if they want to improve and be useful to the country. After all is said and done, it is they who, really speaking, guide the masses and also inflame them. Therefore, the better course for them would be to desist from indulging in “sensational journalism” and play an important part in moulding the destiny of the country. I should not

be surprised if the number of vernacular newspapers increased very considerably in the near future and it would be up to them really to educate public opinion on various matters

According to the Imperial Gazetteer, the missionaries were the pioneers of vernacular journalism. The Serampore missionaries first cast type for the vernacular languages and the earliest vernacular newspaper so far as can be ascertained, was issued in Bengali by the Baptist Mission at Serampore in 1818. For many years the vernacular press preserved the marks of its origin being limited almost exclusively to theological controversy. The missionaries were encountered with their own weapons by the theistic sect of the Brahmo Samaj and also by the orthodox Hindus.

Till about 1850 most of the vernacular newspapers were still religious and sectarian rather than political. During the last half century the character of the press has undergone a marked change and the majority of the newspapers owned by Indians devoted themselves to current topics and political discussion.

Unimportant Journals

About a thousand newspapers published in 1901 fell under three main heads: English papers owned by Europeans and issued primarily for the European community, English papers owned by Indians and vernacular newspapers. Many were unimportant journals of an ephemeral character and with a circulation of a few hundreds only. The number of readers was however much greater than the number of copies printed.

Bombay produced the largest number of vernacular newspapers, and after it came Madras, the United Provinces and the Punjab. Bengal had fewer vernacular newspapers, although later on this province produced a large number of journals, presumably to meet the needs of a widening circle of readers. Their sale suffered from competition with the English newspapers with a comparatively large circulation owned by Indians.

In Madras the vernacular papers with the largest circulation were still the mission organs, among the most important of them were the **Satya Duta** (or messenger of truth), a Tamil paper, and the Anglo-Telugu "Messenger of Truth". Of the Hindu papers, **The Hindu** (published in English), the **Swadesa Mitran** (Tamil), and the **Andhra Prakasika** (Telugu) may be mentioned.

The Bombay journals were almost equally divided between Marathi, Gujarati and Urdu. For a fairly long time the political attitude of the Marathi press was generally that of opposition to Government. The Gujarati newspapers were mainly the organs of the Parsis and of the trading community generally.

A considerable number of papers are published in Urdu and Hindi in large towns of the United Provinces and the Punjab. Many of them are conducted with ability and enterprise and may fairly be described as representative of local opinion among the educated classes.

Bombay Journalism

I wish to say something more about the history of journalism in Bombay, with which I am intimately

connected. It began with the publication of the *Bombay Herald* in 1789 and the *Bombay Courier* in 1790 according to the *Bombay Gazetteer*. The former disappeared after a brief almost meteoric existence while the latter continued to exist as a separate publication until 1847. It enjoyed the exclusive patronage of the then Bombay Government and continued to publish the orders of Government until 1830 when the *Bombay Government Gazette* made its first appearance.

In 1791 the *Bombay Gazette* appeared for the first time and shared journalistic honours with the *Bombay Courier* until 1819 when the *Argus* was started by an Englishman. This journal later appeared in a new garb under the name of the *Bombay Chronicle*. The present *Bombay Chronicle* founded by the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had nothing to do with it. The *Bombay Chronicle* died a natural death in 1822. The proprietor of that journal started another journal called the *Iris*, which for a time had a phenomenal success in connection with the dispute between the two leading sects of Parsis on the subject of the Zoroastrian calendar—a controversy which is still raging in the community.

The chief English papers in 1838 were the *Bombay Gazette*, the *Bombay Courier* and the *Bombay Times* while vernacular journalism was represented by the *Darpan* (Mirror) a Marathi publication, the *Chabuk* (lash) the *Samachar* and the *Jam-e-Jamshed* printed in Gujarati. In 1844 appeared the *Bombay Witness*, a religious weekly which never paid its way and was given up in 1846. The *Courier* was

later merged in the **Bombay Telegraph**, and the **Telegraph and Courier** subsequently became **The Times of India** in 1861. In course of time other English newspapers came into existence, including the **Advocate of India** (an evening paper) and the **Bombay Chronicle**.

Among the Gujarati newspapers—both dailies and weeklies which were started later on—were the **Kaiser-i-Hind**, the **Hindi Punch** (which imitated the **London Punch**), the **Rast Goftar**, the **Gujerati**, the **Satya Mitra**, and the **Sanj Vartaman**. The oldest vernacular (Gujerati) newspaper published in India is the **Bombay Samachar**, founded by Mr Fardunji Marzban, the pioneer of vernacular journalism in Western India, in 1822. The **Rast Goftar**, an Anglo-Gujerati weekly, was first published in 1851 by a small body of Parsi residents of whom the best known is Mr Darabhai Naoroji, M.P. The **Jam-e-Jamshed** first appeared as a weekly paper in 1831 and was converted into a daily in 1853.

Look I want you to summarise this stuff—containing a hundred pages of the speech of Mr. so and so to half a column or two thirds of a column at the most. Understand? There is no room in the paper tomorrow for this d—d stuff to appear as it is or even substantially. This is what you are sometimes asked by your chief in the Reporters Room to do and you have got to do it whether you like it or not. I have done it several times. At a time when there is acute scarcity of paper when paper is rationed when the newsprint quota is miserably poor you can not afford to give a column to a long speech no matter who has delivered it—personalities do not count at all. What counts is the space position at your disposal. And if you are unable to summarise it you would soon prove your inefficiency.

It may also happen that you are about to go home after a day's hard toil and suddenly a lengthy message is handed to you by the News Editor or the Chief Reporter to summarise. You cannot possibly decline the job on the ground that your time is up or that you have not done such a thing hitherto.

If there was one important thing which I learned after joining the Indian Daily Mail or to be more accurate after being appointed as a senior reporter on The Times of India, it was summarising. There is

one thing to remember in a newspaper office and that is summarising, it plays an important part. In certain big newspapers in England there are journalists who have specialised in this art, and summarising is an art which should be carefully studied

As a well-known journalist has put it, "To the busy newspaper reader, who has not the time to make even a casual survey of the many pages to which the modern newspaper extends (now-a-days newspapers are very small in size) a good summary is a boon and a blessing. To be of real use, it should be complete as well as concise. The larger daily newspapers find it possible to epitomise the news of the day in a series of short paragraphs, each dealing with a separate topic, and ranging from a few words below to a few over fifty words each. The task of rapidly condensing a long statement, or speech, and of giving all the absolutely essential facts in a short **precis**, requires special skill and aptitude, when, moreover, it is remembered that the information has to be sought from a mass of proofs and manuscript, which are only accessible to the summary writer just before the paper goes to press. As a good summary gives completeness to the news sheet, it is a pity that it should be abandoned by some journals, but there can be no doubt that the increasing pressure on the great daily newspapers to get to press earlier than was the case in the past has led to the abandonment, in some cases, of the summary."

Headlines

The better the summary given of a long statement or a speech, the greater are the chances of its

being featured and the simpler is the task of the sub editor on duty in dealing with it while giving headlines. Incidentally I may say that without question the most strenuous work in a newspaper office is that of the sub editor who sits with a pile of telegrams and cables and reporters' copy, waiting to be subbed. As Mr R D Blumenfeld has so often said 'A good sub editor is a creative artist'. That creative artist's duty often is to summarise long messages in a short space of time—no easy task.

Speaking of headlines I have often felt disgusted when I found my own copy although well subbed, not properly featured. All copy of course cannot be well featured but exclusive stories obtained after considerable difficulty do deserve proper handling by the sub editor.

Public speakers have little regard for the difficulty experienced in a newspaper office in these troublous times. I have frequently advised my friends—I mean public speakers—to be as brief in their remarks as possible if they want to appear in print quickly. In other words if they make long speeches the reports of their orations are not likely to see the light of day for some time at least for want of space. As I have stated above space position is an important factor to be considered. Let politicians remember that a newspaper loves a brief sparkling and well worded speech it dislikes—nay hates and prunes mercilessly—a speech full of conventional redundancies sheer repetitions and clichés. "Exordiums and perorations are permitted only to orators of the highest rank and even to them only on occasions of real importance, as a journalist has rightly said.

I propose to discuss in this chapter the oft-repeated and much discussed question, should there be a school of journalism? To my mind there is no need for it at all, for why should there be one? It is an acknowledged fact and even my critics will admit it, that the newspaper office is the school of experience and that experience should be gained by a tyro. I know of several instances where persons with University degrees have cut a sorry figure in the profession, their academic qualifications did not help them in attaining the high positions which they aspired for before joining the profession. Even some of the England-retained persons, having passed through schools of journalism, have had to change their vocation.

Groups of Critics

Some years ago I remember having reported the University Convocation address delivered by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, then Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University. He strongly advocated the starting of a school of journalism in Bombay City because he believed that the training necessary for a journalist could only be imparted by such an institution. One might as well argue that there should be a school to train persons for a political career, so that the country may get well-trained politicians.

Actually there are two groups of critics one holding the view that the career of the journalist requires above all innate qualifications natural talent and a good general education At the same time practice is a *sine qua non*—an indispensable factor which the best education cannot replace In schools of journalism there is the risk of artificially forcing natures which have no leanings towards the profession and of launching on their careers a host of people doomed to unemployment or ready to accept any pittance Such people lower the conditions of employment for the entire profession

The other group believes that the modern journalist needs not only wide culture which enables him to interest the reader but also a sound professional training which may spare him many pitfalls in his first days in the profession It is further of the view that special schools of journalism should be created with powers to award certificates which alone should give access to the profession

I am still unable to find out to what extent the school of journalism started at Madras in 1927 has been successful in manufacturing trained journalists fit to conduct a newspaper or even to be successful reporters

The journalists associations of Great Britain seem to be paying much attention to the training of members of the profession In 1926 the Congress of the Institute of Journalists discussed at some length the advantages and the dangers of the scholastic training of journalists I understand that in England of late private schools of journalism have been multiplying themselves—a positive danger to journalism—and

throwing many amateurs on the labour market and contributing to lowering the conditions of employment in the profession. This tendency needs immediate checking. That such a state of affairs should be allowed to exist in an advanced country like England is, indeed, regrettable.

The initiative in the different phases of journalism was taken by the University of London as far back as 1919 when it created a series of courses. In addition to the theoretical courses given by the professors of the University, there is so-called practical instruction given by "professional journalists." But even such training has not stood the journalists in good stead ;

Conditions in U.S.A.

Schools of journalism in the United States of America are considered to be powerful institutions, being supported by multi-millionaires. Joseph Pulitzer, the celebrated founder of the **New York World**, was the first to establish a school of journalism. He endowed it with one million dollars. For some reason or other, the schools of journalism in America "enjoy the greatest favour with the members of the profession, and their graduates easily find work." One does not know to what extent such training as is being given to amateurs in that country has contributed to what is known as "yellow journalism" or "muck-raking journalism," of which Upton Sinclair has so bitterly spoken in recent years!

On the other hand, Austrian journalists have emphatically declared themselves against the creation of such schools. They, however, do not see any danger in pure theoretical courses of journalism for

the use of persons whose situation obliges them to keep themselves informed of the role of newspapers in modern life but they take their stand against any teaching whose purpose is to prepare people for the profession

It is also of interest to know that many young people in Austria begin their career as editorial stenographers Their job which is first of all to receive and sift news, prepares them for the editorial table where they generally find themselves sooner or later

This reminds me of one of the famous editors of an Anglo Indian newspaper who began his career as Secretary to the Editor of *The Times* (London) and after occupying that position for a considerably long time came out here and became first assistant editor and then the editor of the Anglo Indian newspaper But let me say that he never received any training in a school of journalism On one occasion he himself remarked to me that a real journalist could be produced only in a newspaper office

In the next chapter I deal with the necessary qualifications of a journalist

Is the journalistic market crowded in this country? I have often been asked this question. Well, it is to a certain extent. There are newspapers which, having advertised for capable and experienced journalists—either reporters or sub-editors—have been disappointed to find the applicants not coming up to the expectations of their editors. The reason is not far to seek. The applicants very often have not the requisite qualifications and consequently they are rejected. I do not mean to suggest that they should possess university qualifications, I have already dealt with that aspect of the question almost threadbare. In other words, what is essentially wanted is, if you are an aspirant for newspaper work, good natural ability and good education with wide reading.

It is no use overcrowding the profession with either mediocre persons who have no aptitude for newspaper work or with persons who have just gone in for the profession because they are considered unfit in other channels. This reminds me of a statement made by a well-known writer, Mr T A Reed, that "if a man fails in every other business or profession, he buys a pair of spectacles and birch, and turns a schoolmaster, and that to such a man with little or no education, and with no training for his task, parents are found willing to commit the care of their children

during the most important period of their lives Not to the same extent perhaps but somewhat after the same fashion many a young man who finds himself out of employment invests a few shillings in the purchase of a system of shorthand and commences its study in the confident expectation of being able in a few weeks or months to earn a livelihood by reporting I once heard of a young grocer who being suddenly seized with a desire to quit the counter at which he had served for some years and turn a newspaper reporter bought a popular stenographic manual and expressed his intention of persecuting the system till his object was attained He persecuted it indeed with great assiduity but I believe he has never been heard of in the reporting world

Good education

If one wants to fulfil the duties of a reporter one should possess at least a tolerably good education One should in the first instance, make up one's mind whether one is determined to carry on throughout one's career as a journalist If that is not the inclination one had better go in for some other vocation Speaking for myself, before I plunged myself head long into the journalistic career I had determined to stick to it till the last—much against the will of my father who wanted me to be an engineer One should have such firm desire if one wants to be a journalist

In the second place one should be prepared to serve an apprenticeship for some time at least—say one year—before being considered qualified to do some thing useful for the newspaper he is serving I have done that myself and so have most of my colleagues

except perhaps those with influence who were rather fortunate in being promoted straightway as "Assistant Editors" But persons of the latter category have seldom succeeded in the profession There are, of course, exceptions I know of a journalist who in the initial stage was placed under me and who after being shown the methods of reporting meetings, courts, etc., told me frankly that he did not like reporting at all as "it is a drudgery" Whilst I admired his frankness, I regretted his remark Fortunately for him—he was born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth—he soon found an opening elsewhere and today he is the editor and proprietor, in partnership, of a weekly newspaper which is doing very well in this city.

What is wanted is ability to write

The want of education may often, to a great extent, be supplied by unusually good natural abilities, which, under favourable circumstances, will overcome almost any obstacle, but where these are wanting the chances of success are slender indeed Just imagine a dull, uninformed person taking his seat in a boastful manner at a reporters' table at a meeting where a scientific lecture is given He will soon find himself in difficulty because of his inability to follow the speaker and to take down notes of his lecture On his return to office, he will be in much greater difficulty because of his inability to write his copy" How can such a reporter ever hope to succeed?

Linguistic attainments

I think, I have stated elsewhere in this book that before you go to a function to report, you should study

the background so that it would be easier for you to follow the proceedings. It is true that even a well informed reporter some times gets baffled but he is nevertheless in a position to write his copy without any difficulty because of the knowledge he possesses of the subject he is dealing with. Of course he bears in mind the wholesome principle while writing his copy namely if in doubt, leave out.

Another thing to be borne in mind is that linguistic attainments are these days also very essential. Sooner or later—perhaps much sooner than later—Indian leaders will give greater importance to Hindi than to English. Already one hears of this being adopted in some parts of India. In such an event it is advantageous to know one or two languages besides English. When speeches are delivered now a-days in Hindi it is the reporter's job to follow them and report them accurately. It is therefore necessary to know Hindi. Sometimes the reporters are confronted with Gujarati or Marathi speeches, which cannot possibly be ignored. You cannot tell your Chief Reporter or News Editor that you are unable to report such speeches he might think of making some other arrangements for the purpose and to that extent he will naturally have a very poor opinion about your ability. At the same time much can be achieved by mutual co operation at the press table. You cannot remain stiff necked and afford to show the cold shoulder to your neighbour, who may be proficient in Hindi and whose aid you may be required to invoke. While in difficulty it is advisable to compare notes with your colleagues so that you may be confident in presenting a good report which may receive commendation at

the editor's conference the next morning I have always felt myself relieved of anxiety after reporting an important meeting or an important case when told the next morning, "Your stuff was taken note of by the Editor" Well, that is always some consolation. If, on the other hand, something has gone wrong with your report, you may receive brickbats, which also should be accepted with thanks.

I have stated above that a tyro should have a wide reading. The reason is obvious. A knowledge of current affairs is indispensable and will stand him in good stead. These are times when allusions are made in speeches to political episodes in the world with which one should be familiar. Take, for instance the condition of Indians in South Africa. If you do not know the A B C of that affair, you will be wholly at a loss to keep pace with what is being said from a public platform.

My advice to a tyro is read your own newspaper and one or two of your rivals very well so that you may know exactly whether you have missed anything while reporting the previous day.

Above all, what is most important is that you should have a good physique. Although that is not always a qualification, it is essential, for without robust health you would find it rather irksome and laborious to discharge your onerous duties. I think I have hinted in the earlier pages of this book that a journalist without this prerequisite will soon find himself in a position most embarrassing to himself and annoying to his employers.

21 CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Looking back on the past quarter of a century I feel I must say that the position of the working journalist has not at all improved. If anything it has deteriorated. In saying so I hope I shall not be accused of striking an unduly pessimistic note for the facts are as plain and simple as they possibly can be. Let alone myself. Let any journalist having worked for such a long period as 25 years in this country ask himself has the position of the working journalist improved in any way or have any attempts been made in the past by any association or trade union in that direction? The answer is none whatever. What is the reason? It is an irony of fate that the journalist in India who day in and day out champions the cause of his fellow countrymen finds himself stranded as it were being left alone to look after himself. In other words he is left to the tender mercies of his employers.

I have hinted elsewhere in this book that in a big city like Bombay where there is a large number of newspapers the cause of the working journalists remains unpleaded uncared for and what is worse very often utterly neglected. To my mind it would not be any exaggeration to say that the position of journalists is analogous to that of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

This brings me to another question what is the status of the journalists in this unfortunate country? You may ask why unfortunate? I shall presently show how it is. Let us examine their position in this country and compare it with that existing in other parts of the world.

It will, I think, be generally admitted that the engagement, the work, the cessation of employment of journalists are determined by four different methods by simple verbal agreement, by individual written contract, by collective agreement and by law.

Written Contract

Even to the present day there are certain newspaper employers who do not believe in engaging their staff by individual written contract. They think that the journalist is bound to serve by mere verbal directions. This, to say the least, is sheer nonsense, this is an antediluvian practice which should be scrapped lock, stock and barrel. I must say, however, that the number of such employers is comparatively small, and I have reasons to believe that in course of time they will have to give up their tactics and fall in line with other employers who have been adopting more civilised methods.

Exploitation of newspaper men

In this connection, I must mention that the verbal agreement which existed almost everywhere at the dawn of journalism survives in certain other countries also, besides India, for the simple reason that the journalists have not yet realised that they are being exploited by their employers, who believe that the market for the journalists is not at all vast. After

all is said and done the verbal agreement as one writer has well put it is as its name indicates 'the result of a mere discussion between employers and employees not giving rise to any document capable of being prolonged without vicissitudes if the two parties preserve a good understanding it does not give them any real security and risks causing them serious embarrassment and to one of them at least serious injury if they cease to work in harmony Again a verbal agreement although subject to arbitrariness and to caprice is not completely subordinated to one or the other It has been rightly stated that there are in journalism as in other professions customs and usages often tyrannical which it is not easy to dispense with Everywhere today customs age quickly they are often very old things which have not been able to keep abreast of progress In a profession like journalism which has developed in a vertiginous way customs although not belonging to a period of great antiquity are nevertheless not those of our own times They have remained immutable or they have changed so little that they no longer correspond to reality For these reasons an agreement founded simply on custom runs a great risk apart from the insecurity caused by the absence of documents and signatures of creating an anachronistic situation and of gravely harming a man who is obliged to work under antiquated conditions while living in the modern world '

Collective Agreement

On the other hand the individual written contract has the advantage of giving to its signatories a security which the verbal agreement does not fur

nish "It serves as the basis," as one writer has stated, "for the settlement of disputes which may arise between employers and employees, and furnishes each of them with at least the possibility of appealing to the provisions of—sometimes very vague ones it is true—of the Civil Code concerning the hiring of labour "

The collective agreement which organisations of employers and employees sign and which regulates conditions of work, no longer for individual cases but for great numbers of persons, may vary in its scope. Sometimes it only covers a fraction of the conditions of work, for example, the collective agreement governing wages or salaries, sometimes it only applies to one or two categories of workers, the outside contributors of the paper. It may also vary in precision, be more or less detailed, it may merely give the general principles which should serve as the basis for individual contracts, or, on the other hand, it may exactly indicate working conditions with such completeness that individual contracts do no more than reproduce its clauses or refer to them.

I suppose nobody will dispute this: the collective agreement constitutes an immense progress from the individual contract, oral or written. Moreover, the collective agreement affords great advantages. "In the first place, it determines a uniform regulation of working conditions, thus guaranteeing the maximum of equity and making possible the simplification of the conditions of engagement, as well as enabling greater stability in the management of the newspapers to be achieved. If it only possessed the advantage of codifying and unifying existing customs, its worth

would not be open to doubt. But that is not its only value: the conclusion of the collective agreement and its maintenance imply the existence of firmly constituted professional organisations. To secure a collective agreement the professional organisation has to be possessed of vitality and to be endowed with energy such that it could obtain as a rule not only a unification of the working conditions but also their improvement.

Compensation

And what about the law which sometimes lends the journalists the aid of its sanctions? Again if I may quote the same writer: legislation may concern the journalists in several ways. Sometimes there are general laws to which both manual and brain workers (such as the journalists if I may add) are subject as is the case in Great Britain with regard to compensation for accidents. Sometimes there are laws more limited in their scope applying for example only to non manual workers or a part of them: the employees and it may happen as it does in Luxemburg that the definition of this term enables journalists to be included. Sometimes journalists are expressly and specially referred to.

As journalists endeavour to obtain collective agreements so they endeavour to secure the passing of laws covering their particular status. They rightly think that general laws or those more restricted which relate to the large class of private employees cannot fully meet their case.

To my mind the conditions of journalistic work are so exceptional they are different in so many ways from those of manual work and even from those of

other intellectual professions, that it would be impossible to arrive at a reasonable and efficacious regime for journalists except by means of special laws

Employment in India

Now let us examine, as I have hinted above, the conditions of employment in India and other countries. In this country, to our great regret and shame it must be admitted, there is no regulation or collective agreement on working conditions in journalism. The only journalists in possession of an individual contract are generally those who have been imported from the United Kingdom or America and who have signed a contract of this kind before their arrival in India. Latterly, however, a few cases of Indians having been engaged on contract by certain newspapers have come to my knowledge.

I understand that in Great Britain the contracts of employment of journalists are subject to the general provisions of the law concerning relations between masters and servants. For a certain number of years English journalists have benefited from a series of collective agreements, all concluded by the National Union of Journalists.

Similarly, the Institute of Journalists has established a scale of salaries which it is endeavouring to get adopted by the employers.

Conditions elsewhere

In no country does legislation intervene to a greater extent in the journalistic profession than it has done in Italy before the Great War-II. During the Fascist regime the law operated not only with

regard to the enforcement of contracts of employment and certain living and working conditions such as welfare and weekly rest it regulated the very exercise of the profession which it made a closed corporation submitted to a severe control. As a matter of fact journalism did not receive exceptional treatment. It shared this form of regulation with other intellectual professions. Under the terms of the Royal Decree of February 1928, journalism might be practised only by the persons inscribed in the professional register.

I wish such terms existed in India where every Tom Dick or Harry calling himself a journalist, trespasses on the field of really hard working and honest working journalists. I have been clamouring for years to have a register for real and bona fide journalists and have convinced the Journalists Association of India of the necessity for bringing it into existence but my voice has been in the wilderness.

Before the War Japanese journalists only knew of individual contracts established in conformity with the general provisions of the Civil Code relating to the hiring of services.

In the Netherlands there is neither a model contract nor collective agreement. The individual contracts of employment are subordinate to the provisions of the Civil Code concerning the hiring of services. But in Poland there is a marked tendency to regulate the conditions of work of intellectual workers by legislation.

In Portugal things are at sixes and sevens as they are in India. There are no legal provisions which can

be applicable to journalism, which is ruled only by usage. The latter determines the verbal agreements governing the engagement of journalists. The same conditions prevail in Rumania and Spain.

In the United States of America collective agreements are unknown, except in a few cases. I understand that on most occasions questions of employment are settled by verbal agreement.

My fairly long experience as a working journalist tells me that unless the profession is properly standardised and systematised in this country there is absolutely no salvation for the journalists. If they want to take their rightful place among their confreres in other parts of the world they will have to buck up, they will have for instance to look round and see in what respects the profession needs urgent improvement. In other words they will have to put their house in order.

What I find is that the movement towards a definite status so far as permanent conditions are concerned is general but the desire for stability and regulation is universal.

What has been worrying me all these years and I dare say my colleagues in the profession share my feeling is the question of hours of work so far as newspaper reporters are concerned. It is indeed a thousand pities that this question has not yet been tackled in all its bearings. Why it has not occurred even to a representative body like the All India Newspaper Editors Conference I fail to understand. Let me make the position clear. While the sub editors who practically do the same amount of work have fixed hours of duty the reporters seem to have been practically neglected. Very often they work from

morning till late at night For example, if a reporter is detailed to cover a function in the morning such as a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee or a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, he has to hang on helplessly till the meeting is over and then to return to his office to type his "copy" In doing so, he has often to forgo his dinner in his anxiety to finish his "copy" in time

Why cannot something be done to regularise the work of reporters? In a big newspaper office one finds these days an army of reporters, who can be divided into groups, each group working for fixed hours If there is a long meeting, two reporters should be sent to cover it, one to go to the meeting earlier than the other and relieve him at a particular time, leaving a safe margin for his colleague to complete his "copy" I do not know how else the work of the reporters can be systematised! I would welcome any other suggestion made by my colleagues in this connection.

Journalist—not a machine

Take any other profession The first question that arises is that of fixing of hours of work In other words, how much time should the employee devote to his task? Arising from that question is another point—how much should he reserve for his leisure and rest? It should not be forgotten that the journalist is not a mere machine capable of turning in "copy" after "copy" at the behest of his Chief Reporter or News Editor

Labour Code

In other parts of the country all work done outside the agreed hours is regarded as overtime work

and is paid for at a special rate. In certain European countries particularly Austria the employers are fully aware of the fact that the work of the journalist by its very nature, eludes any strict time limitation. Nevertheless they felt obliged to deal with this question in its proper perspective and eventually remedied the defect. In Great Britain the duration of work is not governed by law. Generally speaking the hours of work of reporters do not exceed 44 in the week unless they are obliged to work out of town.

In the United States of America the working day which does not form the subject of any regulations varies from six to ten hours according to the kind of paper and other circumstances. In Russia there is what is known as the Labour Code which lays down that no worker—and the journalists are included in this category—shall work for more than seven hours a day.

That is the position obtaining in other countries and I am of the opinion that it is time Indian journalists organisations if they really safeguard the interests of the profession bestirred themselves and moved in the matter in right earnest.

If after twenty-six years of continuous work as a journalist I were asked what branch of reporting I should avoid, I would say "law reporting" Why? The reason is obvious In Bombay, where I have spent almost my whole career, law reporting is not at all encouraging, not to say somewhat risky I do not know what conditions obtain in other parts of the country, perhaps they are the same as those in Bombay Facilities for reporting are far from satisfactory, sometimes you are obliged to take notes while standing because of your seat being occupied by some busy-body I have already referred to this aspect in an earlier chapter

Accuracy needed

Secondly, in an important case in which the judgment is invariably written, you hardly get an opportunity to see it and compare it with your notes Usually these judgments are hurriedly read in court and consequently it is rather difficult to follow them What is urgently needed is accuracy and that is why reference to the original copy of the judgment delivered is essential My experience is that the needs of the press are seldom realised and the result is that the poor reporter has perforce to make the best of a bad job

Thirdly one has to be very careful to see if what is being reported is not libellous. The Court after all is a privileged place where all sorts of things are said with vehemence not so privileged is the press in reporting them. On more than one occasion have I found it extremely difficult particularly while reporting the proceedings of a libel suit or a defamation case to discharge my duties as an impartial reporter.

Now a days there is a tendency in a section of the press in this country to import comment in law reporting. That is positively dangerous. The reporter has no business to indulge in comments that is the function of his editor. There have been several—I should say numerous—instances in which the press has been penalised for objectionable reporting. To give you one concrete instance which comes to my mind—in the course of the trial of a certain libel case before a Judge of the Bombay High Court the Judge took exception to the accuracy of certain of his observations made the previous day as reported in a leading newspaper. The next day the Judge before the proceedings began observed. I should like to say that (the newspaper was named) has not given an accurate report of what I said about my conversation with the Chief Justice!

Counsel I noticed that my Lord

The Judge I am represented as having stated the Chief Justice told me that there was nothing in his notes showing that the newspaper concerned in involved in the libel suit was in any way referred to in a discreditable manner. I did not say that nor did the Chief Justice say anything of the kind—what I did say was that the Chief Justice told me that he

had no recollection of the particular newspaper having been referred to as a discreditable paper before the Court . ”

Counsel “My Lord, it would be corrected in the press My own recollection is exactly as your Lordship’s ”

Proceeding, the Judge remarked “We are not always correctly reported ”

Counsel “We are accustomed to that ”

Well, the matter was dropped there But the moral is clear do not report anything that you have not accurately heard The best course is to adopt that sane journalistic principle if in doubt, leave out.

Costly litigation

Some time ago, a Judge on the English bench observed that truth in these days was at a great discount The class of untruthful reporters was not inconsiderable The reporter must keep himself absolutely free from malice, otherwise he will subject the proprietor of his newspaper to costly litigation and bring his own career to an ignominious end He should seek to avoid any tendency to exaggeration or depreciation or caricature he may have, and write with the strictest possible loyalty to fact The worst thing, to my mind, the reporter can do is to introduce an unconscious bias in his report owing to strong feeling of political partisanship

The law of libel in this country, (which I have dealt with in a later chapter) as in other countries, is a dangerous piece of legislation against which one should guard oneself Very often I am asked is it permissible to report a libel suit *verbatim*, if a news-

paper is desirous of having such a report? My answer is it is definitely risky to do so because if you did that you would be unconsciously repeating the libelous statements made in Court. It is of course open to counsel to say anything in court in support of their arguments but the press as I have stated above, cannot possibly publish the statements verbatim. Left to myself I would discreetly summarise those arguments and leave out everything objectionable. There you are safe. Why invite unnecessary trouble upon your self and your paper?

It is an admitted fact that often the innocent suffer as well as the guilty in the working of the libel law. I remember a case in which I myself was unnecessarily involved through no fault of my own. It so happened that in a case of criminal breach of trust before the High Court Sessions the Judge in his summing up used certain words with reference to the accused in the case and I accurately reported those words. The next day the accused who defended himself and was eventually found not guilty by the jury wrote a stinking letter threatening the editor with criminal proceedings if the newspaper did not withdraw those words or did not issue a correction. My editor called me and asked me for an explanation. The Chief Reporter when asked what to do in the matter suggested to the editor to stand by the report which he had no reason to doubt. To make my position clear I hurriedly consulted the Public Prosecutor whom I know very well and who was present in court at the time the Judge summed up the case to the jury and his recollection was that my report was perfectly correct. I told the editor accordingly but

he was not satisfied, he asked me to consult the Judge himself. Well, I did so, but the Judge said that it was slightly incorrect and that the report needed a correction. Eventually, however, a correction was given, and the accused was satisfied.

Certain prohibitions

Such are the pitfalls of law reporting. If your editor is prepared to defend you and stand by your report—after all you are the man on the spot—the matter is sure to go to court where it is certain to be decided whether your report is correct or not. But very few editors will incur unnecessary bother and expense.

To sum up, judicial proceedings impose certain prohibitions. No details tending to injure public morals must be printed. Report every case worth reporting in as impartial a manner as possible. Let not any party think that you are likely to do him or her an injustice. You are not concerned with the parties to any dispute which you are reporting, your business is to give your paper a fair and accurate report of the proceedings. One thing more. Avoid chamber proceedings because you are not supposed to know what has taken place in chambers. The reporting of such proceedings is also an offence in this country, unless you do so with the express permission of the judge in chambers.

I have referred to the law of defamation in previous chapters—a law which no responsible news paperman can afford to neglect in pursuit of his daily avocation—and I propose to deal with it somewhat fully in this chapter. Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code is to my mind as important as section 124 A (sedition) and as such it should be grasped and studied carefully by journalists. I go a step further and say that it should always be kept before their eyes not only in their own interests but also in those of the newspapers which they are connected with.

Definition

Section 499 is a comprehensive section it reads: "Whoever by words either spoken or intended to be read or by visible representations makes or publishes any imputation concerning any person intending to harm or knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm the reputation of such person is said except in the cases hereinafter excepted to defame that person."

Now what is the publication of an imputation? A person who is charged with defamation must have communicated the imputation to a third party and the onus of proof of this lies on the person defamed. Communication solely to the person defamed can never

constitute the offence of defamation, for under the terms of the section the communication must be made with the intention of injuring the reputation of another. In other words, if the person aggrieved feels that he is lowered in the estimation of his friends by a person, he is said to have committed the offence. It has been decided by courts of law that a communication of the imputation to the wife of the person libelled is a publication.

Civil Injury

Further, it should be borne in mind that the person who publishes the imputation need not necessarily be the author of the imputation. Thus the proprietor, editor and printer of a newspaper which contains defamatory matter publish that matter as well as the author thereof, since each has contributed by act or omission, as the case may be, to making that imputation known. But whether such publication, although constituting a civil injury, will amount to an offence under the section depends upon the further question as to the intent with which the publication was made. Where the matter complained of is defamatory an intention to injure the complainant must be assumed, unless the person charged can bring the case within one of the exceptions to the section.

One of the important exceptions lays down that it is not defamation to impute anything which is true concerning any person, if it be for the public good that the imputation should be made or published. Whether or not it is for the public good is a question of fact.

In this connection it should be pointed out that by the Common Law of England "neither party, wit-

ness counsel jury or judge can be made to answer, civilly or criminally for words spoken in office' 16 in a judicial proceeding before a competent court although the person publishing the imputation knows it to be false and makes it in order to injure the person to whom it relates

English Law

As a matter of fact no such exception occurs in the section we are dealing with but it has nevertheless been held that this rule of English Law based on public policy does extend to India and this exception has in some cases therefore been imported into the Penal Code For instance it has been often held by Indian Courts that no statement by a witness in the box can form the subject of a charge of defamation It is a well known rule of a law that no action for damages can be maintained on account of defamatory words spoken by parties to a suit or witnesses or by a judge for that matter in the course of his duties or even by an advocate in the cause of his arguments in conducting a case A witness has complete immunity from responsibility in an action for evidence given by him in a court This privilege also extends to statements made by a witness to a solicitor in preparing the proof for trial, and to answers to questions put by police officers conducting an investigation under the Criminal Procedure Code

The reason why this immunity is granted is that it concerns the public and the administration of justice that witnesses giving their evidence on oath in a court of justice should not have before their eyes the fear of being harassed by suits for damages but that the only penalty they should incur if they give

evidence falsely should be an indictment for perjury ”

Another exception to the section is that it is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion whatever respecting the conduct of a public servant in the discharge of his public functions, or respecting his character, so far as his character appears in that conduct and no further

A third exception goes a step further and says that it is no defamation to express in good faith any opinion in respect of the conduct of **any person** so far as his character appears in that conduct, and no further

True report—no defamation

What is most important to a newspaper is the exception which points out that it is not defamation to publish a substantially true report of the proceedings of a court of justice, or of the result of any such proceedings. It has been the tendency of late of certain newspapers indulging in sensational journalism to publish only those portions of a case of defamation which suit them. That is, indeed, wrong, nay very dangerous, and if challenged in a court of law, the newspaper concerned will not be protected by that exception to the section. The relevant words to be borne in mind are “a substantially true report,” you cannot therefore publish a distorted version of a case of defamation and splash it in your paper. If you cannot publish even a substantial report for reasons of space in your paper, let it be at least a brief summary but a correct one. No garbled version of a case is permissible under the law

Another thing to be noted is that it is not defamation to express in good faith any opinion respecting the merits of any performance which its author has submitted to the judgment of the public or respecting the character of the author so far as his character appears in such performance and no further

Illustrations in regard to this exception are a person who publishes a book submits it to the judgment of the public a person who makes a speech in public submits it to the judgment of the public an actor or singer who appears on a public stage submits his acting or singing to the judgment of the public

Imputation made in good faith

Yet another exception says that it is not defamation to prefer in good faith an accusation against any person to any of those who have lawful authority over that person with respect to the subject matter of the accusation

Similarly it is not an offence to make an imputation on the character of another provided that the imputation be made in good faith for the protection of the interests of the person making it or of any other person or for the public good

These are the principal exceptions to the section with which newspapers are generally concerned

Under the law the publisher of a newspaper—and this is not widely known among the journalists—is responsible for defamatory matter published in it no matter whether he was aware of such matter being defamatory or not Of course if the publisher proves that defamatory matter was published in his

absence and without his knowledge and that he had no reason to doubt the **bona fides** of his assistant to whom he had temporarily entrusted the management of his paper that he would misuse the powers given him, the court trying his case might take a more generous and lenient view and acquit him. But in such cases the person concerned is liable to be proceeded against civilly for damages. In England, however, the law is wholly different. There the publisher of a newspaper is criminally responsible for the publication of a libel in his newspaper, irrespective of the fact whether the libel was inserted with or without his knowledge. There have been numerous instances where publishers have been held guilty of the offence in England.

Rumours—avoid them

Newspapers should further bear in mind another aspect of the law. Repetition of rumours concerning persons, which are without foundation, is never excused by the law, and the editors of newspapers publishing such rumours are liable to prosecution. Recently within my knowledge several newspapers in northern India got themselves involved in libel suits for the publication of malicious rumours in their columns. This dangerous path should, therefore, be avoided.

Civil damages

I now propose to deal with the civil aspect of defamation, which cannot be lightly brushed aside by the newspapers. There have been cases in which high damages have been awarded to plaintiffs for the libellous statements made in newspapers. What

is a libel? A libel is both a criminal offence and a civil wrong. As I have stated above you may be found not guilty by a magistrate and acquitted and discharged but you are liable to be proceeded against civilly if the complainant is not satisfied with the lower court's decision. A libel is a publication of a false and defamatory statement tending to injure the reputation of another person without lawful justification or excuse. In other words the defamatory statements made may be in writing or in printing or may be conveyed in the form of caricatures or any other similar representations e.g. a scandalous picture. The famous Rasputin suit is an instance in point where heavy damages were awarded by the court trying the suit to Princess Irina of Russia the wife of Prince Youssoupoff.

Various kinds of libel

As has been clearly pointed out by Mr Ratanlal Ranchhoddas the well known author of legal publications Words are *prima facie* defamatory when their natural obvious and primary sense is defamatory. Words *prima facie* innocent are not actionable unless their secondary or latent meaning is proved by the plaintiff.

It is libellous to write and publish of a man that he is a villain a man of gross misconduct a man of straw' unfit to be trusted with money. An obituary notice of a living person and any ironical praise may be construed as libels. Some time ago the defendant in a case published in his newspaper of a woman who was an instructress in physical culture and dancing and who also conducted an institution

for girls, that she was unfit to carry on her profession or work, and that by carrying it on she would be in a position to ruin the future of the girls receiving training in her classes. It was held by the court trying the case that that was a gross libel, and the plaintiff was awarded damages.

Complaints of defamatory nature

Very often is it forgotten by the newspapers in this country that they are subject to the same rules as other critics and have no special privileges. "The range of a journalist's criticisms or comments is as wide as that of any other subject, and no wider. Even if in a sense newspapers owe a duty to their readers to publish any and every item of news that may interest them, this is not such a duty as makes every communication in the paper relating to a matter of public interest a privileged one."

It has been repeatedly pointed out by courts of law both in Bombay and elsewhere in this country that a journalist who publishes complaints of a defamatory nature which are not true is not specially privileged, on the contrary he has a greater responsibility to guard against untruths.

On the other hand, a journalist does not transgress the limits of fair comment if all material facts are correctly published. For instance, he may criticise the conduct of a public leader in the strongest terms possible, but if he imputes dishonesty, he must be able to justify his allegations. The privilege is not covered at all with reference to what are commonly known as calumnious remarks on the character of a person.

Parliamentary proceedings

In England it has been laid down and I suppose it is also being followed in this country that statements made by members of Parliament on the floor of the House though they might be untrue to their knowledge cannot be made the foundation of civil or criminal proceedings however harmful they might be to the interest of a third party or person. This privilege however does not go beyond the four corners of the Parliament chamber.

Violence of language used

A fair and accurate report (it need not be verbatim) of a debate in the Legislative Assembly of a Province or the Central Legislative Assembly is privileged even though it contains defamatory matter on the ground that the advantage of publicity to the community at large outweighs any private injury resulting from the publication. There is however a snag in this. If the subject of a debate is of public interest, legitimate criticism is fully justified, but the privilege cannot possibly protect a journalist imputing for instance criminal conduct to a person on statements made in the course of a debate.

The violence of language used with reference to a person, the nature of the imputations conveyed and also the fact that the defamation was deliberate and malicious will enhance damages in libel actions.

It is of course permissible to a defendant to seek to mitigate damages by proving that the evidence led falls short of justification, or that there is absence of

malice, or that he is prepared to tender an apology at the earliest opportunity, or that he was given undue provocation by the plaintiff

Yet another thing to be remembered is this in this country courts have jurisdiction to restrain the publication of a libel by injunction under section 54 clause (1) of the Specific Relief Act

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CONTEMPT OF COURT

One of the most important branches of law of which the newspapers have got to be careful is the Contempt of Courts Act as amended by the Act of 1937. This Act was necessitated by the conflict between different High Courts over punishment for contempt of subordinate courts. It has resolved any doubts as to the powers of the *High Court of Judicature* in regard to the protection of their subordinate courts from contempts. The High Courts have inherent powers to deal with offences relating to contempts.

What is contempt?

Speaking generally, contempt of court according to Oswald, may be said to be constituted by any conduct that tends to bring the authority and administration of the law into disrespect or disregard, or to interfere with or prejudice parties litigating or their witnesses during the litigation. The dictionary meaning of contempt is a wilful disregard or disobedience of a public authority.

As has been well described by Tekchand among the varied classes of contemnors the editors, publishers and printers of newspapers frequently fall foul of the law. That the publishers of newspapers should find themselves within the mischief of the law oftener

than others, is not surprising. One reason is that in their intense desire to serve their readers with the latest news—and report of cases provide a delectable morsel to the sensation and scandal loving among their readers to whose perverse taste the press must pander—the newspapermen deviate from the track of prudence and part company with discernment and then they suddenly find themselves within the clutches of the law.”

Reports of pending cases

Some of the newspapers have of late developed a tendency to publish reports of pending cases of a highly controversial nature. If, however, there is a case or a suit of considerable public importance, the newspapers would, I think, be within their rights to report it from day to day, provided, of course, a fair summary of the day's proceedings is published.

What is necessary to bear in mind is that it is none of the business of the press to play the role of a law reformer and critic of a court and its officers. The press should confine itself to “the narrow ambit of just criticism” and should not transgress the bounds and proceed to attack the authority of courts of law. In other words, the newspapers could be said to be at fault if they assailed the authority of judges by indulging in gross abuse and vile attacks.

Principles of law

The principles governing the law of contempt with reference to newspaper publications fall under the following heads:

(1) “It is a contempt of court to scandalise the court or offend against the dignity of a judge by attri-

buting to him dishonesty or impropriety or incompetence, regardless of the fact whether the case with reference to which the offending remarks were made is pending in the court or has been decided

(2) It is a contempt of court to publish an article in a newspaper commenting on the proceedings of a pending criminal case or a civil suit reflecting on the judge, jury the parties their witnesses or counsel appearing in the case. It is immaterial whether the remarks are made with reference to a trial actually proceeding or with reference to a trial which is yet to proceed provided that the comment has a tendency to prejudice the fair trial or influence the decision

(3) 'It is a contempt of court to publish any matter affecting the proceedings of a pending case which has a tendency to prejudice the public for or against a party before the case is finally heard. It is not necessary to prove that a judge or jury will be prejudiced

(4) 'General criticism of the conduct of a judge not calculated to obstruct or interfere with the administration of justice or the due administration of the law in any particular case even though libellous, does not constitute a contempt of court

One of the earliest cases of contempts as far as I remember was against the late Surendra Nath Banerjee, owner and publisher of the *Bengalee*, a daily published in Calcutta. An article appeared in that paper containing certain remarks against Mr Justice Norris. I do not wish to quote those remarks suffice it to say that it was held by the High Court of Calcutta that it was a most scandalous and unholy attack upon Mr Justice Norris. The Chief Justice

thought that the imposition of a fine would not be sufficient and, therefore, he sentenced Bannerjee to two months' simple imprisonment.

If Bannerjee had tendered an unqualified apology to the Court, the latter might have treated his case leniently.

There have been several other cases in which the editors of newspapers have got themselves involved in Contmpt of Court cases

During my stay on the staff of an English daily, the paper was used for contempt of court in connection with the Malegaon riot cases. The newspaper wrote an article which, according to the High Court, had a tendency to undermine the dignity of the court and to embarrass the administration of justice.

Sometimes misleading headlines in newspapers and posters also bring editors to grief.

26 PROHIBITION OF PUBLICATION OF NAMES OF MINORS— CHILDREN ACT

Recently there have been a few cases in which some newspapers in Bombay Province found themselves in difficulty in matters arising from the cases of youthful offenders by publishing their names and other particulars. It is therefore necessary to point out that it is a distinct offence under the Bombay Children Act 1924 to publish anything leading to the identification of juvenile offenders.

The law is clear on the subject. Section 27(B)(1) lays down that 'no report in any newspapers or news sheet of any offence by or against a child or of any proceedings in any court relating to such offence shall disclose the name, address or school or include any particulars calculated to lead to the identification of any such child nor shall any picture be published as being or including a picture of any such child.'

Stiff Penalty

There is a somewhat stiff penalty provided for breach of this law. Any person (we are concerned with the publisher of a newspaper either a daily or a weekly) who contravenes the provisions of the Act is liable to be sentenced to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding two months or with fine or with both.

It is essential to know that under the law a "child" means a "person under the age of sixteen years," i.e. male or female. The law also defines a "youthful offender" as meaning "any child who has been found to have committed an offence punishable with transportation or imprisonment."

Juvenile delinquents

Before this Act came into operation, the newspapers published, without let or hindrance, many accounts of offences committed by children. As this went on persistently for quite a long time, it was eventually decided by the Government of Bombay (under the Montford scheme) to enact legislation putting a stop to that obnoxious practice. Of course, I must say that responsible and well-known newspapers scrupulously refrained from publishing details of cases relating to juvenile delinquents disposed of in courts, but in important ones they just made non-committal allusions to the offenders concerned and did not even comment on the cases.

In England, I believe, the law is the same as it is in this country. In fact, the English enactment is stricter and takes a more stern view of lapses on the part of newspapers. It is certainly objectionable on the part of a newspaper to publish unsavoury particulars concerning an unfortunate juvenile offender, thereby blasting the child's prospects.

I remember the editors of two newspapers being hauled up to answer the charges brought against them by the authorities for publishing details of certain cases in which minors were involved. To my knowledge neither of them was committed to prison, but

the fact remained that the prosecutions drew wide spread attention of the journalists and created a veritable stir among the other newspapers

Protection of Juvenile interests

I look at this matter from one standpoint only—leave aside the law as it stands. What benefit does a newspaper derive from giving undue publicity to such cases? Does the publication help it to increase its circulation in any way? On the contrary is it not highly desirable for the editor to keep such matters out of his newspaper in the best interest of the juvenile concerned? Why not help the unfortunate child even though he has lapsed into a grave crime by reclaiming him and improving his prospects? The publication of youthful crimes does immense harm to the offenders

All things considered I think it is in the fitness of things that the Children Act should be enforced and enforced rigidly in this country. I must say that when this enactment was on the legislative anvil of Bombay Province the members who participated in the debate on the floor of the Legislative Council welcomed the measure and showered compliments upon the Member in charge of the Bill

Ever since I was a cub reporter the Indian press has been subjected to a notorious piece of legislation—the Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931, which has been responsible for the “untimely death” of many an enterprising newspaper. In fact this Act has been hanging over the Indian press like the sword of Damocles, and I have attended numerous meetings at which it has been unequivocally condemned. It is, indeed, a pity the protestations of our politicians and newspapermen against this Act have so far been of no avail, one can only hope that the National Government will see to it that this obnoxious legislation is removed at the earliest possible opportunity from the statute book both in the interests of the country and of the press as a whole.

Some of the provisions—nay, almost all the provisions—of this Act are dangerous to the interests of the press. Let us examine them. In the first place, the Act empowers the executive, meaning Government, to demand a security in advance from a newspaper. This security is liable to be forfeited if, in the opinion of the executive, the publisher of the newspaper has offended against any of the following provisions of the Act.

(1) Whenever it appears to the (Provincial Government) that any printing press in respect of which

any security has been ordered to be deposited under section 3 is used for the purpose of printing or publishing any newspaper book or other document containing any words signs or visible representations which

(a) incite to or encourage or tend to incite to or to encourage the commission of any offence of murder or any cognizable offence involving violence or

(b) directly or indirectly express approval or admiration of any such offence or of any person real or fictitious who has committed or is alleged or represented to have committed any such offence or which tend directly or indirectly

(c) to seduce any officer soldier sailor or air man in the military, naval or air forces of His Majesty or any police officer from his allegiance of his duty or

(d) to bring into hatred or contempt His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India or the administration of justice in British India or any class or section of His Majesty's subjects in British India or to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the said Government or

(e) to put any person in fear or to cause annoyance to him and thereby induce him to deliver to any person any property or valuable security or to do any act which he is not bound to do or to omit to do any act which he is legally entitled to do or

(f) to encourage or incite any person to interfere with the administration of the law or with the maintenance of law and order or to commit any offence or to refuse or defer payment of any land

revenue, tax, rate, cess or any other due or amount payable to Government or to any local authority, or any rent of agricultural land or anything recoverable as arrears of or along with such rent, or

(g) to induce a public servant or a servant of a local authority to do any act or to forbear or delay to do any act connected with the exercise of his public functions or to resign his office, or

(h) to promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects, or

(i) to prejudice the recruiting of persons to serve in any of His Majesty's forces, or in any police force, or to prejudice the training, discipline or administration of any such force

These provisions are like tentacles from which it is difficult to escape once the publisher of a newspaper is caught napping. In other words, they make it a penal offence for any bitter criticism of the administration of the country which, according to the authorities, offends against the Act. Mr A Ranga-swami Iyengar, being perfectly aware of the sweeping provisions of this enactment, remarked some years ago that it was impossible for any newspaper or press seriously to attempt to escape the provisions of this Act once Government, with the Intelligence Department and the Secret Services that moved behind the scenes, made up their mind to take action against it and no power on earth could prevent the ruin of the press and the newspaper once the authorities decided to bring it about.

It is sometimes argued that the Act provides an appeal to the High Court, but that provision is, to my mind, a mere eyewash. In effect, it lays down that

if it appears to a Special Bench (empowered to try such cases) on an application made by an aggrieved party that the words complained of or objected to are not of the nature described in the Act the Special Bench shall set aside the order passed by the executive.

I have known of very few cases being successful in appeal. Of course the High Court is not to blame for the refusal to interfere with the executive order. That has been well pointed out by Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar. Referring to the interests of journalists being in jeopardy Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar said that the High Court could not possibly go behind the decision of the executive. It had no material placed before it whereby it could judge whether the criticism was intentionally made or whether it could create disaffection. Therefore ultimately it comes to this that it is not even an alternative remedy. It is the sole remedy and the executive becomes the judiciary. That I submit is the worst form of combination.

In the word of a lawyer of considerable experience the scope of the Press Act is far wider than that of the Penal Code. The provisions of section 4 of the Act are extremely comprehensive and the onus is cast on the petitioner to establish the negative that it is impossible for the newspaper against which action is taken under any circumstances to come within the purview of the section.

Commenting on the section Sir Lawrence Jenkins former Chief Justice of Bombay and later of Calcutta remarked. It is difficult to see to what lengths the operation of this section might not be plausibly

extended by an ingenious mind. They would certainly extend to writings that may even command approval. An attack on that degraded section of the public which lives on the misery and shame of others would come within this widespread net. praise of a class might not be free from risks. The onus is laid upon the person whose security has been forfeited to prove that the publication selected by the Government at their own discretion may not have the tendency described in the various clauses. This is not only reversing the ordinary procedure in trials, but the difficulty of proving such a negative as this must in many cases be insurmountable."

In certain cases the Act has in the past been somewhat hastily applied by the authorities. So much so, that when a former Home Secretary of the Government of India, on his attention being drawn to such application of the measure, remarked with regret that "I am grieved to find that this harassing over-zeal was being displayed by magistrates, who were enforcing the letter and not the spirit of the law."

That is the position so far as this Act is concerned, and, as I have stated above, it now remains for our future legislators or rather future administrators of this country to repeal this Act, a measure scathingly criticised both inside and outside the Legislative Chamber and even by a great Judge, who had the misfortune to deal with a case falling under it.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER

[I was invited to deliver a lecture on Newspaper Reporter under the auspices of the Bombay Students Brotherhood on July 14 1940 The following is the full text of the lecture which I have thought it advisable to incorporate in this book.]

Let me say straightway that reporting plays an important part in a daily newspaper It has been stated and very rightly so by a great journalist that from time immemorial nay since the beginning of life on this planet news has played a vital part in the human and even in the animal world What is the scenting of danger by animals but news that their safety is threatened? The very word newspaper means a journal containing news and nothing but news save of course the editorial page which is replete with the views of the paper on topical events

How To Get News?

Now how does the newspaper get news? I shall presently explain It is an elaborate process News is obtained from sources such as the police courts the High Court the Coroners Court shipping offices hospitals and the Police Commissioners office The news gathered from these sources is by no means exclusive news for it is got by every reporter There have been instances however when one stumbles over a good piece of news not obtained by ones colleagues in rival newspapers And when that is covered the reporter honestly feels and so does his paper

that he has played his part creditably and that he has rightly earned his day's wages

Some Misapprehensions

Before going into details as to how exclusive news is usually gathered, I wish to remove some misapprehensions about our craft. In the first place, reporting is not one of those arts which can be picked up without any difficulty, it requires a good deal of knowledge of various matters with which the average reporter comes in contact in the course of his daily duties. To acquire that knowledge one has to proceed very cautiously and with patience. One cannot possibly expect to be the Chief Reporter or the News Editor of a newspaper without going through the various stages. Let me digress for a moment. Reporting, for some reason or other, is looked upon by some educated men—men with university degrees—as a craft not worth going in for. "Reporting is a drudgery!" I should like to be a sub-editor, or an assistant editor." This is how these educated men think of my calling. But they forget that they cannot possibly dream of becoming an assistant editor without first having a thorough grounding in the reporters' room. To such persons let me say this. "You have missed your vocation, you had better go in for some other profession. You cannot get on to the press or take up journalism as a career. For Heaven's sake, don't waste your time."

Reporting—An Art

Some fancy, of course not without reason, that they have literary ability and can write an article on any topic under the sun. The pity of it is that they

do not realise that a man may write faultlessly and be yet unfit for journalism. Others think they have some brilliant ideas which they can very well express in newspaper columns. But they forget that newspapers do not exist for their ideas. There are yet others who believe that journalism is a lucrative profession. They are absolutely unaware of the fact how journalists somehow manage to pull on with the low salaries that they get.

Mind you I do not wish to pour cold water on the enthusiasm of any one to embark upon journalism as a career. But what I have just said are the facts—unvarnished facts—from personal experience. At the same time I do not wish to suggest even for a moment that reporting is so difficult an art that it cannot be picked up.

This brings me to the question which is oft repeated these days. Should there be a school for journalism? I am one of those who believe—and again I say from personal experience—that the newspaper office is in itself a school where a tyro can be properly coached up. Why should he be even coached up? Nobody coached me up. I was left to myself as it were to do reporting. Of course a sound general education is taken for granted. Next in importance is physical fitness. It determines one's outlook on life and power of endurance is needed in the long days and nights and above all arduous journeys involved in the quest of news. Then again personality counts for much. If a reporter has a good personality he is likely to beat all his rivals sometimes in the matter of getting a first class story for his newspaper.

Reporters' Room

In the reporters' room a new recruit comes across all sorts of persons. This room is usually accessible to all those who have something interesting or even heart-rending to tell. From a lawyer who has some interesting case to give down to a humble labourer who has some hard things to tell about his master, from a Cabinet Minister—in these days of Provincial autonomy—who wishes to indulge in some half-truths down to a poverty-stricken clerk who is over-burdened with work and deprived of a decent living—all these persons are welcome in the reporters' room.

Accuracy In Reporting

It is in this room that the news in fact is "manufactured," if I may use that expression, properly scrutinised and after proper verification, written up without any exaggeration. The reporter has got to be accurate in reporting a story. If a "cub", or a junior reporter relies for his stories on facts and nothing but the facts,¹ he can be stated to have made a good beginning. Remember, very often in spite of being careful a reporter is misled. But it always pays to be accurate. Accuracy is the chief thing, otherwise, you are sure to land your paper into serious trouble. After all, the editor depends for news stories published in his paper upon the men on the spot, the reporters.

Shorthand

Another important thing to be borne in mind is that it is essential for a reporter to be well acquainted with shorthand. Now-a-days knowledge of

shorthand is not considered in certain quarters a *sine qua non* for the simple reason that public speeches are not reported *verbatim* as they used to be about 20 years ago. In those days a reporter's equipment was shorthand and always shorthand. In fact he lived under the tyranny of his notebook. Summarising of speeches was practically non-existent. The report of a political speech began somewhat on these lines. Mr G. K. Gokhale delivered a speech under the auspices of the Bombay Presidency Association last night on the present situation in the country. He said—and here followed Mr Gokhale's speech *verbatim*. The average reader today has not the time at his disposal to go through the report of a long speech. What he needs is a good and intelligent summary of a meeting—it may be a political or a social gathering—with a good intro (introduction as it is called by most persons).

Nevertheless a good knowledge of shorthand will stand you in good stead. If you are ignorant of it you will not be able to quote a striking passage in the first person in a speech which is bound to attract the notice of a reader however busy he may be. Without shorthand you will not be able to report judgments very often delivered orally by High Court Judges and magistrates. While taking notes the reporter usually marks in the side of his note book important passages so that when he sits down to transcribe he will have no difficulty whatsoever in reassembling the importance of those passages.

Assembly Reporting

For Legislative Assembly reporting shorthand again is essential. Big newspapers in this country

like **The Times of India** and **The Statesman** have a staff of reporters well-versed in shorthand. They are usually known as the members of the Press Gallery in the Assembly.

Yet another thing to which I wish to draw the attention of those who wish to take up journalism as their career is that while reporting court cases, do not be guided by what a lawyer or a litigant tells you. You are likely to burn your fingers if you implicitly believed in what a litigant told you about his case. The best course for you would be to verify a particular case in the court itself before giving it to your paper. After all, a lawyer or a litigant is an interested party. At the same time, be very careful that you are not "got at" by any party either in court or elsewhere. If Mr. A thinks that the best course to avoid publicity would be to approach a reporter with "hush money", the easiest and the most straightforward course for the latter would be to snub him, or, to avoid unpleasantness, ignore him. The reporter's primary duty is to report an occurrence without any fear or favour.

Reporters' Functions

So, the "cub" reporter gradually learns the various tricks of his craft. You will now expect me to tell you how a reporter goes about to get news. In every newspaper there is the Chief Reporter, whose functions are well laid out. He marks the diary—the reporters' diary—in which the day's assignments are all entered up for him by his subordinates. In marking the diary he remembers which reporter is capable of doing a particular assignment. The senior repor-

ters are usually given something out of the ordinary. What are known as Day calls are done by juniors. The Day calls include visits to hospitals, the Coroner's Court, the Police Commissioner's office, the fire brigade stations and the like. You might ask how is it possible for a reporter to cover all these rounds in the short space of time at his disposal? Well, the reporter does all these rounds with one eye on the clock, another on his copy. He has to work against time. While at the Coroner's court, he may come to know of the outbreak of a big fire. In that case, he will either have to dispose of the work in hand very quickly or keep it in abeyance until that important job is completed to his satisfaction.

Assignments

Assignments like Municipal Corporation meetings or Assembly meetings are done by seniors. In addition, they have also to do big stories such as interviews, political stories and arrivals or departures of prominent personages. After the reporter's diary is marked, the Chief Reporter takes it to the News Editor, who scans it and asks him how many columns it would be necessary to allot to the reporters. Having paid his respectful call on the News Editor, the diary is made available to the reporters, each of whom then sets out to do his job for the day. The Chief Reporter then settles down and, after doing some routine work, himself goes out to cover his own assignment. Copy then begins to flow into the newspaper office and goes directly to the Sub Editors' room, where it is subbed and sent down to the printers for setting.

Quest of News

In his quest of news, the reporter has to be thick-skinned. In other words, he should be prepared for rebuffs and insults from the person he interviews. He should be bold enough to approach anybody, no matter what his or her station in life may be. As a matter of fact, the reporter is the last person on this earth who will be welcomed at gatherings where **in camera** decisions are taken or where secret political plots are hatched. As is well known, Congress Working Committee meetings are always conducted **in camera**, and yet they are reported from day to day in newspapers. You might ask, how are they reported? The reporter patiently waits to get hold of some politician on whom he can depend for the veracity of the news he gives. But he takes pretty good care to see that the politician is not "let down", or else his source of getting political news will soon vanish. Moreover, the information thus obtained should be used very discreetly.

Inside Story

If you rely merely upon official statements issued at the end of a private political meeting, your paper will not thank you for getting it. What is wanted is "the inside story" which is invariably not revealed to the press for obvious reasons. In this connection, I am of the opinion that reporters in the West are a bit ahead of their confreres in the East. They are, of course, by mature experience, better qualified to handle political stories. Here, I am afraid, I am treading on somewhat delicate ground. The fact of the matter is that western journalists know perfectly

how to establish contacts to get good political news. They have no doubt better opportunities to discharge their duties than those afforded to the journalists in the East.

Reporting Elsewhere

In this connection I wish to make one point clear. In Bombay the average journalist—I mean the reporter—compares favourably with his confreres in the west. Reporting in Bombay is much more advanced than that practised in other parts of country. I say so from personal experience. In Calcutta for instance I was not at all impressed by the method of news getting. Their scoops are few and far between. While Calcutta has perhaps a larger number of daily newspapers than one finds in Bombay, the standard of reporting in that city is not so advanced as it is here. If one wants to satisfy oneself in this connection one has only to compare two big newspapers published in the two cities.

Old Days—No Enterprise

About 25 years ago in Bombay when there were fewer daily newspapers and less competition reporting was not up to the mark that you find today. In those good old days—I have still vivid recollection of those happy days—the reporters depended for their daily copy on one senior reporter who used to roam about the Coroner's Court and the Police Commissioners Office where he collected all the news that could be had and used to dish out his copy to the waiting journalists in the Reporters Room at the Esplanade Police Court. In those days scoops were

practically unknown. The same stories appeared in every local newspaper. This went on for a long time until the reporters knew to their cost that their method of reporting should be changed in the best interests of their respective newspapers.

It was only when **The Evening News of India** and **The Indian Daily Mail** appeared in Bombay, one competing fiercely with the other, that the reporters scratched their heads and began to get exclusive news or "scoops", as they are commonly known amongst the journalists. In their efforts to give "scoops" or "beats" some newspapers sometimes produced "stunts". A "stunt" may be defined as a counterfeit "scoop", for it is an effort to palm off to the public as something original and important a sensation which exists only in the imagination of the author.

One or two newspapers in India have a scheme for offering good rewards for the "scoops" obtained. This acts as a sort of stimulus to the reporter to be on the look-out for exclusive stories.

In conclusion, I wish to make it clear that the views I have offered on the various aspects of reporting have been the direct outcome of a fairly long period in journalism. I have yet to learn a good deal more myself, and that can be learned, let me say again, from further experience, for I believe that experience and experience alone will make you a perfect journalist and a well-qualified reporter.

